

Franklin Township

Somerset County, New Jersey



Township Technical Review Committee (TRC)

Municipal Building
475 DeMott Lane
Somerset, NJ 08873
732.873.2500
Fax: 732.873.0844
www.franklintwpnj.org

MEMORANDUM

To: Zoning Board of Adjustment

From: Technical Review Committee (TRC)

Date: February 26, 2020

Re: NYSMSA Limited Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless (ZBA-16-00033)
156 Cedar Grove Lane, Somerset (Block 424.12, Lot 5.01)

The applicant has submitted the application materials listed below:

- 23-sheet set of site plan drawings prepared by Scherer Design Group last revised 9/30/19
- "Quail Brook Parking Study Report" prepared by Scherer Design Group dated 7/02/19

Project History

The applicant received D(3) conditional use variance and site plan approval for placement of a 118-foot tall telecommunications tower to the rear of the Cedar Hill Swim Club site located on Cedar Grove Lane. The proposed monopole tower would be placed to the far right-rear corner of the site and would be of an "evergreen tree" design. Associated mechanical equipment would be placed near the base of the tower within a 50' x 50' (2,500 square foot) compound area enclosed by an 8-foot tall chain link fence.

The tower has not been constructed.

Current Application

The application before the Board involves modifications to the parking lot for the swim club, consisting of:

- Removal of 20,297 square feet of parking area
- Associated reduction in the number of spaces and redesign of the parking lot layout

Per the Parking Study Report, the proposed removal of portions of the swim club parking lot results from a review conducted by the Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission (DRCC). The Parking Study Report indicates that the DRCC found that portions of the parking lot had been constructed without proper approvals and thus the applicant is proposing to remove the portions of the parking lot “to meet the impervious area limits imposed by the DRCC.”

Per page no. 16 of 23 of the site plan, the applicant is removing portions of the parking lot in order to obtain a jurisdictional determination exemption from the DRCC. This is being accomplished by limiting the increase in impervious coverage prior to 1980 to under a quarter of an acre.

Per the Parking Study Report:

- Current parking spaces: 296
- Spaces to be removed: 73
- Proposed parking spaces: 218¹

In addition to Site Plan approval, the reduction of parking spaces for the swim club requires the following variance:

- Off-Street Parking: Approx. 732 spaces required² – 218 proposed

Review Comments

1. Required Number of Parking Spaces per Ordinance. Per the Township zoning ordinance the parking requirement for “membership swim clubs” is “1.5 spaces for each membership.” The Township Senior Zoning Officer has determined that the 1.5 space requirement is to be applied per membership *household* (not to each individual member).

The Parking Study Report calculates a parking requirement per ordinance of 1,928 spaces (based on 1,285 *individual* members) which unnecessarily inflates the parking requirement per ordinance. Regardless of the nature of the club membership (whether by family or individual), the applicant must calculate the number of membership households and apply the 1.5 space requirement to that figure. For example, applying a household size similar to the average household size of Franklin Township (2.63) would result in roughly 488 households or roughly 732 required parking spaces. It is noted, however, that the application form indicates a parking requirement, per ordinance, of “approximately 732.”

¹ The Parking Study Report actually indicates 223 proposed spaces. However, the application form indicates a figure of 218 spaces which is consistent with that reflected on the site plan drawing.

² See comment #1.

2. Justification for Proposed Parking Variance. The Parking Study Report presents a rather detailed analysis of parking demand for the swim club. In very brief summary the Parking Study Report found the following:

- *Number of Spaces Needed on most popular “Festival Days”³*: 219 spaces
- *Number of Spaces Need on top three “Normal Days”*: 166 to 182 spaces

Based on this analysis the authors of the report opined that the number of proposed spaces at the swim club would be “adequate to support the club’s parking needs.”

The applicant should present testimony explaining the methodology behind the Parking Study Report.

In particular, the applicant should explain how the number of cars was derived. The Parking Study Report indicates that number of cars was “calculated” based upon “manipulated data”. What does that mean? Are the parking demand figures not based on actual counts?

While the Parking Study Report addresses parking demand during “Festival Days” of Memorial Day, July 4th and Labor Day, the swim club apparently holds (or has held) a number of swim meets which also bring a higher number of cars to the site. The applicant should address the parking demand during such meets.

3. Agreement with Adjacent School Use. At least one of the approvals for the adjoining school use makes mention of a written statement of agreement between the adjacent private school and the swim club regarding shared parking. On a daily basis, staff has observed on average of 5 to 10 cars associated with the school parked in the swim club parking lot.⁴ That number becomes higher during school events and in association with the summer day camp held at the school. The applicant should address the existence of such an agreement and the impact of this proposal on that agreement.
4. The Traffic Study indicates that the average number of parking spaces needed on the most popular ‘festival day’ is 219 parking spaces, which is more than the 218 parking spaces provided. In addition, sheet no. 5 of the traffic study indicates, ‘this analysis is conservative...’ with various assumptions. If that is indeed the intent of the report, it may be more appropriate to indicate the totals provided are the required maximum number of parking spaces required by the data analysis performed and not average. Testimony should be provided.

³ Memorial Day, July 4th and Labor Day

⁴ It is noted that such parking occurs in one of the areas of the parking lot that is proposed to be removed.

5. The site plan indicates that 30,067sf of impervious area was installed without DRCC approval after 1980. The site plan indicates that the intent of the design is to obtain an exemption from DRCC by reducing the increase in impervious coverage from 1980 and the cell tower improvements to under a quarter of an acre. The parking study indicates, 'due to...impervious area limits imposed by the DRCC, the swim club will not be able to meet the required parking spaces.' The applicant's professional should provide testimony clarifying the DRCC's position on whether a limit is being imposed on the impervious coverage by the agency or if the applicant is attempting to receive exemption from DRCC review and regulations. It appears that the applicant is attempting to have this project deemed as minor development project for stormwater management purposes thus triggering the variance for a reduction in parking.
6. Sheet no. 22 of the site plan indicates, 'parking areas overlaid with new hot mix asphalt 12.5M64 surface course, 2" thick' are proposed over the existing gravel parking lot. An asphalt section of 2" for vehicular traffic is unacceptable. If the intent is to pave the parking lot, the applicant should install a HMA surface course of 2", HMA base course of 4" and a subbase of 6" dense graded aggregate. The site plan does not clearly identify the areas of hot mix asphalt construction and should be revised. The proposed curbing limits are not clear on the site plan. In addition, reconstructing the parking and changing the finish material from gravel to hot mix asphalt may require approval from the DRCC.
7. Sheet no. 16 of the site plan indicates the total project disturbance is 39,787 sf. This calculated area only includes the cell tower improvements, and area of impervious area to be removed. The calculation does not include the limits of disturbance required to reconstruct the parking lot. The limit of disturbance required to reconstruct the parking lot will increase the limit of disturbance to over 1 acre and would be deemed a major project. In accordance with the Township Ordinance, major projects must comply with water quantity control, water quality and groundwater recharge standards. The applicant should provide testimony regarding the extent of the proposed improvements.
8. Topographic information for the existing parking lot is not provided. We recommend this be provided if the applicant is disturbing the existing parking lot.
9. Do Not Enter markings should supplement the proposed do not enter signage.
10. An existing utility pole has been added to the site plan east of the larger parking lot, which is located within the travel way. The applicant shall either install protective bollards or realign the parking lot aisle.
11. Proposed limit of disturbance line work is missing on sheet no. 9.

12. If the Board is included to approve the application then the resolution should state that the application remains subject to any and all conditions imposed by the Board under the original approval (except as may be specifically modified or waived by this approval).

