

Franklin Township

Somerset County, New Jersey



Technical Review Committee

MEMORANDUM

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

To: Zoning Board of Adjustment

From: Technical Review Committee

Date: August 20, 2020 [updated 9/20/20]

Re: Ananda Mandir, Inc. – Temporary Use Permit (ZBA-20-00015)
269 Cedar Grove Lane (Block 508.02; Lot 5.03)

As requested, we have reviewed the submitted application materials listed below and issue the following report for the Board's consideration.

Project Description

The subject site is located on the westerly side of Cedar Grove Lane and is occupied by a place of worship and associated cultural hall. The use was originally approved in 1999 with numerous subsequent approvals related to expansions of the use over the years.

One of the conditions of approval was a restriction against outside events.

The applicant seeks a Temporary Use Permit in order to conduct events partially outdoors during the High Holy Days October 21-25 and November 14. The application form explains the proposal:

Explain, in detail sufficient for the Board to understand the nature of the proposal, issue, appeal, interpretation or matter:

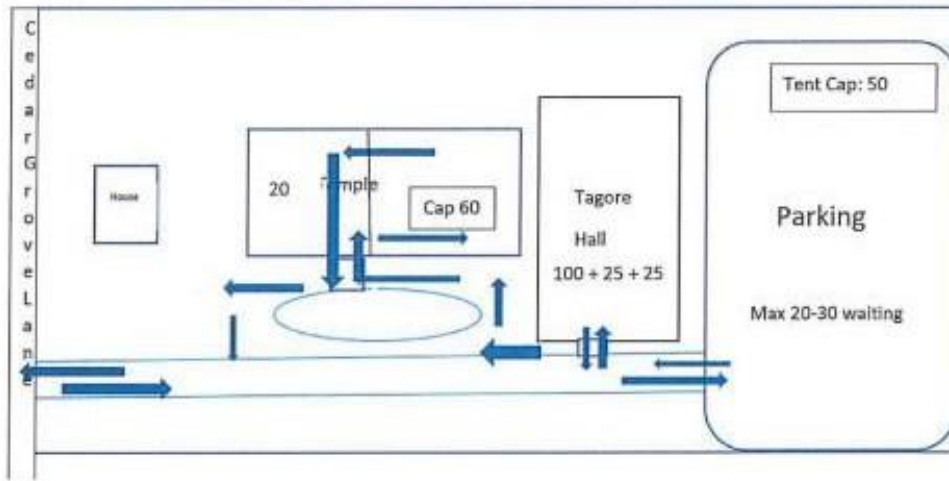
Applicant proposes to construct a tent in the parking lot as a waiting area for members of the congregation prior to entering the temple during the High Holy Days since the members allowed to enter the Temple are restricted pursuant to Executive Orders 152, 156, 161 and 173 of the Governor. The dates for which the temporary use is requested are October 21-25 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. and November 14 5:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. The protocols for said services are annexed hereto as Exhibit "A".

General Plan to Handle devotees attendance:

***** Everyone onsite (inside or outside) has to have a mask covering mouth and nose and keep safe distancing AT ALL TIMES******

1. **On-line Registration Only** (advertised on the web page and also by email invitation to membership registry) to control total attendance per day. A 10% provisional walk-in attendance will be kept but not advertised.
2. Temple attendance will be limited to the maximum allowed by Executive Order on the date of the event. No floor carpet seating will be allowed. Attendees to utilize previously staged chairs to maintain a safe distance.
3. Attendees will arrive at the community hall to receive their ticket to enter the temple in batches of 10 every 30 min.
4. Total attendees registered in a day in the morning session will be limited to max 600 adults and evening 400 adults with max capacity of 300 at any time spreading around the temple, hall and outside tent.
5. There will be an overflow attendance waiting in the outside Tent on the periphery of the parking lot facing Frank Lake property to avoid any noise from the houses on the other side of the parking lot (see fig.)
6. Tagore Hall will have max occupancy maximum allowed by Executive Order on the date of the event inside the Hall. Hall will have a video projection of the temple deities to allow people to watch the event from outside the temple.
7. A tent will be rented in the parking lot where there will be chairs for people to sit when the hall and temple are full capacity. Whether the tent will be open or closed will be decided a few days before the event based on the weather forecast and expected temperature outside.
8. Simple pre-packaged food will be served at the tent where people can sit at safe distanced chairs. Family members will be allowed to sit closer.

9. Police will be hired for security during days of expected high turnout based on the on-line registration data.
10. Max capacity of 300 at the site is based on the family attendance window of a 2-hour visit at the site. Will allow approximately 600 in two batches in the morning and 400 in the evening.
11. Foot traffic (schematic) Flow



Review Comments

1. The sketch is not detailed enough for an appropriate review. The proposed should be overlaid on a copy of the site plan with the various proposed elements (e.g., tent, etc.) drawn to scale.

After such a plan is presented staff will be able to review and potentially comment on issues such as available parking, vehicular circulation, emergency access, protection of occupant of the tents from vehicular traffic, etc.

AM Response: Please see the attached diagram.

Explanation of Foot Traffic:

- a) On car entry people will be asked if they have registered online. In case they have not, they will have to turn their car back and exit
- b) For every half hour slot we are currently going to book only 50 people. So even if people linger in the area for an hour and we have a total of 100 cars in the parking lot. The capacity of the Parking area is for 314 cars
- c) On parking their car, they will walk up to 'Tagore Hall' where their online registration will be checked. If the time slot on the registration matches the timeline, they will be asked to enter Tagore Hall and stand in a socially distanced line
- d) The normal capacity of Tagore Hall is to hold 636 people standing or 276 people in chairs not counting the additional sitting space in the foyer and the mezzanine. 25% of

- 276 is 69 people who can sit inside Tagore Hall waiting for their turn.
- e) Inside Tagore Hall we will keep 40 chairs which will use up 57% of the reduced seating capacity of 69 chairs. That will leave 43% of the chair seating capacity unused. We will use this for standing people. 25% of the standing capacity is 25% of 636 which is 159 people. But we would have already used 57% of this capacity with chairs. So the balance 43% of 159 is 68 people.
 - f) Hence combining 40 chairs and 68 people standing we get a total of 108 people if we keep to the 25% of maximum capacity. But since the maximum allowed right now is either 25% or 100 whichever is lower, we will finally have in Tagore Hall:
 - a. 40 Chairs
 - b. And an additional 60 people who can stand for a total of 100 inside at any point in time
 - g) In case we see that the people inside Tagore Hall is becoming more than 100 (there will be designated marked out places for people to stand inside the Hall and/or we will ask people to wait in the Tent that we will set up for that purpose
 - h) From Tagore Hall in batches of 8, people will be ushered into the 'Temple' complex
 - i) The Temple has a normal indoor capacity of 152. 25% of 152 is 38
 - j) Inside the temple there will be four rows of 8 squares marking where people need to stand in a socially distanced way
 - k) Each batch of 8 will enter the Temple, open their shoes in the open hall, kept available only for that purpose, and then enter the temple and occupy a row
 - l) While the first batch of 8 people enter the Temple, the second batch will be on its way to the Temple from Tagore Hall. They will then open their shoes and enter and occupy the second row
 - m) Finally after all the four rows have been occupied, the Priest will say a prayer for the congregation which will last about 5 minutes. Post that the first group will make its exit to the hall where they will wear their shoes and exit the Temple. Followed by all the others.
 - n) The above process will take about a half hour
 - o) Then next batch of 8 people will then be ushered into the temple from Tagore Hall
 - p) This process will continue for all the given time slots for which people have registered online for. The timeslots and days during which this will happen are:

Puja Timings: Only Online. No in person members in the Temple will be accommodated

Puja Name	Time	Date	Activities
MAHISHASURE MARDINI LIVE	5:00 AM to 7:00 AM	18th Oct, Sunday	Mahishasura Mardini Live
SOSTHI	5:00 PM to 9:00 PM	21st Oct, Wednesday	Debir Bodhon, Amantran & Adhibas
SAPTAMI	9:00 AM to 2:00 PM	22nd Oct, Thursday	Puja & Anjali
	5:00 PM to 9:00 PM	22nd Oct, Thursday	Stuti & Anjali
MAHA ASHTOMI	9:00 AM to 2:00 PM	23rd Oct, Friday	Puja & Anjali
	5:00 PM to 9:00 PM	23rd Oct, Friday	Stuti & Anjali
SONDHI PUJA	1:30 AM to 2:18 AM	24th Oct, Saturday	Sondhi Puja
MAHA NOBOMI	9:00 AM to 2:00 PM	24th Oct, Saturday	Puja & Anjali
	5:00 PM to 9:00 PM	24th Oct, Saturday	Stuti & Anjali
BIJOYA DOSHOMI	9:00 AM to 2:00 PM	25th Oct, Sunday	Puja & Anjali
	5:00 PM to 9:00 PM	25th Oct, Sunday	Stuti & Anjali

the Temple, people can pick up a sealed packet of food from outside Tagore Hall as they make their way back to their car.

- The applicant needs to submit an event plan and details for an event that complies with the Executive Orders that are currently in place; if new Executive Orders are issued before their event which would allow higher occupancy, the applicant can submit a revised plan for consideration. If new Executive Orders are issued that become more restrictive, the applicant will need to comply with those new Executive Orders.

AM Response:

Event Plan:

- Online Registration

All people will have to register online and pick a half hour slot during which they will visit the temple. Sample online form which will be used for registration is shown here.

Online Form

People will have to pick the days and the 'half hour' timeslot that they want to register for.

They will also have to give the names all of the family members being registered

ANANDA MANDIR
Hindu Temple & Community Center

Durga Puja 2020
Grand Sponsor Pre-Registration

Name *
First Name: Anjan Last Name: Lahiri
Email *: atahiri1999@gmail.com Phone Number *: (732) 995-0023
Address *
8 Shady Brook Lane
Cranbury NJ 08512
Choose the day(s) *
 Soathi Saptami Ashtami Nabami Dashami
Saptami
1:30 PM to 2:00 PM
Attendee 1 (Self)
First Name: Anjan Last Name: Lahiri

8

b) For any half hour slot the maximum number allowed will be 38 people right now. This is because 25% of the capacity of the Temple is 38 which is what is allowed based on the current guidelines. In case the guidelines change we will change the number closer to the date of the event.

c) All people who come to the complex will present themselves at the open Area outside of 'Tagore Hall' where their temperature will be checked and in case there is anybody with fever, they and their entire family accompanying them will have to go back to their car and exit the complex

d) Post that their online registration will be checked. They will have to show an email or an SMS confirmation of the time slot that they would have previously booked online

d) If their time slot matches then they will be asked to join a line which will be managed with social distancing

e) People will then walk over to the 'Mandir' in batches of 8 as mentioned above

f) Inside the temple there will be clear markings to show where people will stand (there will be no carpets or ability for people to sit). These markings will be made in four rows of 8 each

g) Once a batch of 8 has entered, the second batch of 8 will be ushered into the temple for a total of 32 (or the prevailing number as communicated by the health authorities). Including the priest, there will be upto 6 people inside the Temple conducting the ceremonies permanently for a total of 32 plus 6 which is 38

h) Once the room has the desired number of people, the Priest will bless the congregation with a prayer which is expected to last 5 minutes

Post that invocation the first row of 8 who came in will be ushered out followed by the next row

3. A permit is required for the tent. At the present time, there is no indoor dining permitted, so the applicant cannot have a “tent” (with sides) and serve food; the applicant can have a “canopy” (sides open) and serve food. The applicant state they will make a decision on whether the tent in the parking lot will be “open or closed a few days before the event based on weather forecast and expected temperature outside” – this decision cannot wait until a few days before the event to make because it effects how the applicant will be able to use the tent. If the applicant want to serve food under the tent – the applicant cannot have sides; if the applicant want the sides down, the applicant cannot serve food – this is an example where the applicant need to develop a plan that complies with the current Executive Orders and if the Orders change, the applicant can modify the plan, but we cannot approve a plan that doesn’t comply with the current Executive Orders. If the applicant plan on using heaters for the tent, a permit from Construction Department is also required. The applicant will need to apply for an Electrical permit for the lighting.

AM Response: Based on feedback we have decided that there will be no dining at all in the Tent. We will use the tent as a holding area for people in case there are too many people in line to enter Tagore Hall.

We will put up a 20 feet by 40 feet square tent. Here lengthwise we will put three rows of four chairs each. Each set of four chairs will be 6 feet so 12 feet is needed for each set of four chairs. In the 40 feet length we can put three sets of four chairs.

With a width of 20 feet we can put three rows of chairs. So in total we can put 9 sets of four chairs each for a total of 36 chairs in this tent. This will be a canopy tent and will be ‘open’

Please find enclosed the diagram of the complex and the place where we want to put up the ‘Tent’. Tent is proposed in the current parking lot. The Parking Lot can hold 314 cars. With the planned flow of 38 people every half hour, even if we have people linger for an hour and a half in the complex, we will need a maximum of 114 parking spaces. The Tent proposed is a 20 feet by 40 feet or 800 square feet. That will take up less than 10 car parking slots from the parking lot of 314 cars. Hence we will not have any challenge of space for cars to park

4. The applicant need to submit a plan on how the applicant are going to control the number of people on site – the applicant state the applicant will have “On-line Registration Only” – but then the applicant go on to state that the applicant will have a 10% provisional walk-in attendance. If the applicant are going to allow people who are not registered to attend, how is the applicant going to control the number of people on site?
AM Response: Our plan is to implement “On-Line Registration Only”! Walks-ins will not be allowed. We have made that amendment to our plan based on this feedback.
5. More information is needed for the “simple pre-packaged food”. The serving of this to those in the tent may or not be allowed depending on executive orders in place at the time of the event. A temporary food license will be required if food is allowed.
AM Response: We are aware and will follow the order.
6. If the Board approves the request, staff would recommend that there be a specific requirements for staff to do an inspection prior to the event for the whole site to ensure compliance.
AM Response: Understood and agreed.
7. The applicant needs to hire Fire Prevention staff to be there during entire event at a level approved by the Director of Fire Prevention.
AM Response: Requesting Peter Lanfrit to address this item.

Updated TRC Response (9/10/20) in response to the Ananda Mandir’s responses in yellow and the associate plan:

- Will need Temporary Food License for the caterer providing the pre-packaged bags of food that will be handed out. As September 4, 2020 they will be allowed indoor dining at 25% capacity of Tagore Hall. If they choose to do this they will be required to have an inspection prior to the event to ensure it follows the NJDOH guidelines.
- A permit is required for the canopy – Part of the event is in the evening; are they going to have lights under the canopy? If so, lighting details need to be submitted and an electrical permit may be required.
- Because the canopy is in the parking lot, vehicle protection is required for the canopy
- “On car entry people will be asked if they have registered online. In case they have not, they will have to turn their car back and exit’ – where in the parking lot will this be done? – applicant needs to provide details
- If the event is done as proposed with on-line registration, the number of people on scene will be controlled and most of the concerns are addressed.

