

Franklin Township

Somerset County, New Jersey



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING
Planning – Zoning – Affordable Housing
Planning Board – Zoning Board of Adjustment

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MEMORANDUM

To: Zoning Board of Adjustment

From: Mark A. Healey, PP/AICP
Director of Planning/ Senior Zoning Officer

Date: December 16, 2020

Re: Cedar Hill Prep School (ZBA-19-00041)
152 Cedar Grove Lane, Somerset (Block 424.12, Lot 6.03)

The applicant has submitted the application materials listed below:

- 3-sheet site plan set prepared by VanCleaf Engineering dated 10/22/20
- Letter addressing traffic prepared by Dolan & Dean dated 1/20/20 (the “Traffic Letter”)

Project History

The site was approved for construction of a private school in 2007 (PLN 2006-00031). Per the resolution:

- Enrollment limited to: 160 students.
- Generally operates: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- Licensed to provide “before care,” “after care” and enrichment programs and also offers tutoring; aside from after care and enrichment program the Applicant does not offer any night programs. Saturday’s are limited to tutoring and enrichment programs which are generally from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and usually draw about 30 students.

The applicant returned in 2011 (ZBA-11-00013) for expansion of one of the buildings on the property to add floor area for classroom use. Per the resolution:

- No mention of change to number of students or staff
- Applicant was required to provide a written statement of agreement with the neighboring swim club regarding shared parking

The applicant returned in 2012 (ZBA-11-00020) for expansion of the school. Per the resolution:

- New Building "D": One story, 14,066 square foot building consisting of roughly 3,000 square foot gym and 12 classrooms
- Elimination of expansion approved under ZBA-11-00013

- Expansion of Building "C": 1,922 second floor addition containing office space, nurse's office, break room and conference room
- Enrollment limited to 330 students
- Applicant agreed to investigate providing a walking path between the school parking lot and the adjacent swim club to facilitate the shared parking

Current Application

The current application consists of two components: (1) a use variance application to allow operation of a summer day camp on the property; and (2) a site plan application to install a soccer field and running track. A description of each component is described below:

- Use Variance Application – To allow operation of a summer day camp
Per the application form, the applicant is “applying to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for Use ‘D’ Variance approval to allow a summer camp on the property.”

Day camps are not a permitted use in the R-40 zone and the day camp was not incorporated into the approvals previously sought for the site. Thus, continued use of the site for a summer day camp requires *D(1) Use Variance approval*.

The Traffic Letter provides the following with respect to the summer camp:

- Camp enrollment: 250 to 300 children
- Staff members: 50 to 60
- Campers attend 3, 4 or 5 days a week
- Camp day starts: 7 am (arrivals vary from 7am to 8am)
- Camp day ends: 4 pm (by 4:15 pm the majority of the campers are picked up)
- Approximately 5% stay later for aftercare and are picked up by 6:30 pm
- Traffic-related figures:
 - 280 campers on average (not all attend every day and there are absences)
 - Morning drop-off:
 - 3 vans: 30 campers @ 10 campers per van
 - 125 parent cars: 250 campers dropped off by parents @ 2 campers per car
 - 25 staff vehicles: staff members typically college students who carpool
 - Afternoon pick-up:
 - 3 vans: 30 campers @ 10 campers per van
 - 118 parent cars: 235 campers picked by parents @ 2 campers per car
 - 25 staff vehicles: staff members typically college students who carpool
 - 15 campers stay for after care and are picked up during the evening peak hour
- Site Plan Application – To install a soccer field and running track
 - proposed in the front left portion of the site in front of the newer school building.
 - Involves associated grading and tree removal,
 - See figure 1.

Review Comments

- **Use Variance Application – To allow operation of a summer day camp**

The TRC reviewed the use variance application and offered the following comments:

1. Traffic Impact Letter. While the number of campers is in-line with the number of students proposed at the school, Township staff has observed that the overall traffic flow is noticeably more active in the summer months while the summer day camp is in operation.

The TRC offers the following comments with regard to the Traffic Impact Letter and/or need for additional information:

- The Applicant stated that camp enrollment is 250 to 300 children and then uses 280 for the basis for trip generation citing absences and not everyone is attending every day. The Applicant's Engineer should provide data to verify this.
- It is too expansive to claim 2 children per car for drop off without count data.
- The 30% figure of children using the van should be verified by counts. That would be 75-90 children per the numbers listed in the report. This is in conflict with the 30 students listed using the vans on page 2 of the report.
- Counts should be provided verifying that 50-60 staff members only use 20-25 vehicles. Assuming that nearly half of the staff car pools is too expansive.
- In addition, the applicant should provide additional information regarding whether school staff occupies the building while the summer day camp is in session. The school parking lot currently contains 50 parking spaces, yet overflow parking occurs on the swim club lot.
- Analyses needed to confirm the lack of delays.
- Traffic Counts for the 2017 trip generation data are necessary.
- Applicant indicated camp trip generation was comparable to the Cedar Hill Trip Generation during the school year. A previous report indicated that the trip generation prior to the Cedar Hill Prep School Expansion led to capacity analyses of LOS E during the PM peak hour driveway and F during the AM peak hour driveway, and post expansion to be LOS F for both peak hours. Comparable trip generation would indicate a LOS F at the same driveway for both peak hours. In addition, the applicant should specify how the student body arrives/departs the school during school year, i.e. are they dropped off in a similar manner to the Summer Day Camp or is there busing services for the school.
- There is a discrepancy in the Applicant's table where the applicant describes 25 parents entering and 15 parents exiting during the evening peak hour.
- The applicant needs to demonstrate adequacy of the site to accommodate the operational characteristics of the site – which was designed for a school use/ not day camp – 51 spaces (assuming staff cars is correct at 25) that leaves only 26

spaces for 125 parent vehicles – how does this work? TRC has observed a noticeably higher number of parents using the adjacent swim club site compared to the school that suggests a difference in drop-off/ pick-up operations and/or time frame compared to the school.

2. Shared Parking Agreement with Adjacent Swim Club. As indicated above, previous approvals for the school address use of the parking lot of the adjacent swim club. One resolution requires proof of a written statement of agreement between the school and the adjacent swim club regarding shared parking and another requires that the applicant investigate provision of path between the parking lots to allow this shared parking.

On a daily basis, Township staff has observed an average of 5 to 10 cars associated with the school parked in the swim club parking lot. That number becomes higher during school events and in association with the summer day camp held at the school in the summer.

It must be noted that there is recent approval before the ZBA for modifications to the swim club parking lot that would eliminate 73 parking spaces from the swim club parking. The parking spaces proposed to be removed are in the area of the site currently used by the school. See figure 2.

The applicant should address the existence of such an agreement and should address the impact of the loss of these spaces on the operation of the day camp (in terms of parking needs, drop off/pick-up and traffic circulation).

- **Site Plan Application – To install a soccer field and running track**

I offer the following comments:

3. The proposed running track would be located about 20 feet from the right-of-way of Cedar Grove Lane, while the soccer field would be located about 60 feet from the front property line along the roadway. I offer the following comments:
 - o Section 112-47.H, conditional use standards for schools, and approval of the original site plan calls for provision of a buffer around the perimeter of the school. In particular, the original site plan required the retention of existing large trees along the Cedar Grove Lane frontage. However, the proposal would involve the removal of most, if not all,¹ of the existing trees along the Cedar Grove Lane frontage to the north of the emergency access drive. The applicant needs to justify this to the Board as it is not consistent with the intent of the original site plan approval.

¹ The tree removal/ retention indicated on the plan is not accurate. Several of the trees identified for retention along the site frontage, and within the interior of the site, are located at or within the limit of disturbance and/or within proposed grading areas or adjacent to the track.

- The applicant needs to address whether any means need to be employed to prevent errant balls from reaching Cedar Grove Lane. If so, such means should be depicted on the site plan
4. The soccer field and running track adjoin a wetlands area. The applicant needs to demonstrate compliance with applicable NJDEP regulations/ proof of necessary approvals.
 5. The site plan needs to address Chapter 222, Trees, including calculation tree removal calculations and required tree replacement. This analysis should address the comment offered in footnote #1.

Figure 1: Location of proposed soccer field and running track



Figure 2: Removal of parking spaces at swim club site

