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VILLAGE OF AIRMONT
PLANNING BOARD
NARRATIVE SUMMARY

223 CHERRY LANE (KINGDOM HALL OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES)
SITE PLAN
Tax Lot 56.17-1-13

This is an application for site plan approval of a neighborhood place of worship at 223 Cherry Lane. The parcel contains 157,295 square feet (3.6± acres) of lot area and is currently used for a single family dwelling. The dwelling will be demolished and a new neighborhood place of worship, to be used as a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, will be erected.

Existing Conditions

The property is in an R-35 zoning district. Neighborhood places of worship are allowed "of right". Zoning Code, § 210-16.A(5). A "neighborhood place of worship" is defined as: "A building or structure on a lot of at least 20,000 square feet that is used exclusively for the conducting of organized religious services." Zoning Code, §210-174. The proposed project conforms to this definition.

The parcel is an existing flag lot. The mast is approximately 100 feet wide at the Cherry Lane DSL, and widens as it moves to the west. The property spreads to its full extent behind two existing homes (approximately 255 feet west of Cherry Lane). The main portion of the lot is approximately 354 feet deep and 360 feet wide. The grade rises westerly from Cherry Lane on a relatively even slope, and continues to rise westerly of the property.

The parcel is bounded on its east and west sides by existing single family residences. Immediately south of the parcel is vacant land that is part of a large residential parcel having frontage on Cherry Lane. Beyond that parcel are electricity transmission lines that traverse the rear yards of additional single family residences. To the north are the athletic fields of Cherry Lane Elementary School, with the school building and parking areas further to the north. Across Cherry Lane to the east is Camp Scuffy, a Town of Ramapo-operated summer day camp.

Along the parcel's southerly lot line, there is an old electricity transmission line and tower owned by the Orange & Rockland Utilities, Inc., subsidiary of Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. ("ORU"). The applicant is advised that this line, while still maintained, is de-energized, and has been replaced by a newer line approximately 150 feet to the south.

The transmission line exists pursuant to unrecorded easement agreements entered into between Rockland Electric Company (a predecessor of ORU) and I.A. Guildersleeve and Maude Guildersleeve (prior property owners) in September 1913 and in December 1914. (Copies of the

agreements, together with a cover letter from ORU's attorney and illustrative maps, are attached.) The agreements call for the transmission wires "to clear all fruit trees in orchard and poles to be not less than forty-five feet in height." Rockland Electric was also granted the right to "trim and cut such trees as shall interfere with the proper maintenance and insure the safe operation of above mentioned line."

Unlike more modern easements for transmission lines, there is no additional right of way granted in connection with the easements, nor are there restrictions on the landowner's use in proximity to the lines. Therefore, there are no property rights held by ORU that would prevent the use proposed by applicant.

Applicant's Proposal

The applicant is the West Spring Valley Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, which will own and operate the property. The applicant proposes the erection of a new neighborhood house of worship, which it calls a "Kingdom Hall". The new building will have a single story and contain 11,224 square feet of gross floor area. This is well below the 62,918 sf allowed under the Zoning Code (0.40 FAR).

The Kingdom Hall will include two auditoriums (each having a capacity of about 180 occupants) for worship services, smaller meeting rooms, offices, a small library, and lavatories. Worship services will be held concurrently in the auditoriums. Having two auditoriums allows for greater interaction among attendees, and also allows for simultaneous use by different language groups for services.

No rectory, living quarters, or kitchen facilities are proposed. There will be no bells, chimes, or outdoor music. Jehovah's Witnesses do not use their Kingdom Halls for social events or for fund-raising, nor are the Halls used for schools, day care centers or any other secular use.

136 parking spaces are proposed. The Zoning Code requires one parking space for every 200sf of floor area, or one space for every three seats, whichever is greater. The proposed number of parking spaces will support up to 408 seats.

Approximately 375 parishioners plan to meet at this new Kingdom Hall. Worship services in the auditoriums are scheduled concurrently. Normal weekly services have lower attendance than weekend services. Services usually last for 1 hour and 45 minutes. They are normally scheduled on two evenings during the week and at two different times on Sundays, usually at 10 am and 1pm. There will be some additional special events during the year, with somewhat higher attendance (*i.e.*, funerals, holiday services). This usage is counter to school traffic from Cherry Lane School and Camp Scuffy, and so will not create an additional traffic burden on the area.¹

¹The existing peak hours in the area, as identified in the applicant's traffic study, are between 8:00am and 9:00am and between 4:00pm and 5:00pm during weekdays; and between 11:00am and noon and between 4:00pm and 5:00pm on Sundays.

Vehicles will enter the property at its “mast” connection with Cherry Lane (a county road). A new driveway will wind up the mast and connect to the parking area in the main portion of the parcel. There is sufficient sight distance available where the proposed driveway meets Cherry Lane. The main portion of the parking area will be in front of the proposed building, with smaller additional parking areas on either side of the building. The main parking area will be built with pervious pavement, to increase water infiltration and decrease the volume and rate of surface water runoff.

The building will be butterfly-shaped, with a central section serving two outboard wings. It will have a frontage of approximately 149 feet and a maximum depth of approximately 76 feet. A canopy that will extend from the front of the building to, but not over, the access drive to provide protection during inclement weather.

The building will tie into existing municipal sewer and water service in Cherry Lane. Natural gas and electricity are also available from Cherry Lane.

The applicant has taken a number of steps to reduce the impacts of this project on the natural environment. The building has been reduced from its original size by approximately 16 feet in length. A second story has been rejected because it would increase the overall footprint by adding stair towers, additional building entries and sidewalks.

The applicant is requesting a waiver to allow 38 “compact car” parking spaces. These spaces, at 8.5’x15.5’, are smaller than the standard 9’x17.5’ spaces, resulting in a 1,320sf reduction in impervious coverage. In addition, the two parking areas in front of the building (down gradient), totaling approximately 23,752sf, will be surfaced with porous pavement.

A storm water management plan has been designed to capture surface water flow from the building, parking area, and other impervious surfaces. Generally, surface water will be captured from up-gradient lands to the west and north by a bio-retention swale to be built along the southerly portion of the parking area. The swale will receive discharge from a bio-retention feature to the north as well as sheet flow from the parking area.

The swale will direct surface water to a bio-retention plunge pool near the southeasterly corner of the parking area, and then to an elongated bio-retention basin running northerly toward the entry drive. Run-off will be then be directed via pipes down the access drive to a Cultec water quality treatment structure and then to a level spreader, before entering the storm drain system in Cherry Lane. A catch basin near the bottom shoulder of the entry drive will capture water running down the drive, and a pipe will direct this run-off to the Cultec structure and level spreader.

Rooftop runoff from the building will be directed to the rear of the building, and then overland to a bio-retention feature. This allows treatment prior to discharge through the porous pavement.

A complete landscaping plan will be presented as project review continues. The applicant is committed to provide appropriate landscaped screening in order to assure the privacy of both itself and its neighbors. Additional internal landscaping will be provided to create an appropriate atmosphere for worship.

A ground lit monument sign is proposed for the north side of the access drive, visible from Cherry Lane. A hot box for United Water New York is proposed near that same location.

Lighting for the entry drive and the parking area will be provided from 20 foot high lamp poles fitted with 175w metal halide lamps. All lamps will be shielded to prevent light from spilling over the property lines, and also to cut glare from the light source. A photometric scheme has been included in the submission. Lights will also be mounted on the building. Lighting will be placed on automatic timers, to be turned off approximately one-half hour after the last usage at night. Some security lighting may be maintained, especially near the building.

Dated: February 14, 2012
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