

MEMORANDUM

TO: Township of West Orange Planning Board

FR: Gerard M. Haizel, PP, AICP, Principal

**RE: PB-24-04 – 25 Prospect Avenue
Block 151, Lots 1**

DT: May 28, 2024

The following is prepared on behalf of the West Orange Planning Board. The information is for advisory purposes only and is intended to assist the Board's decision-making process. Below are descriptions of the projects based on the supplied plans and documentation as well as commentary on issues evident from them.

Items Reviewed

In preparation of this report, I have reviewed the following items:

- Township of West Orange Application form for the Planning or Zoning Board of Adjustment, dated January 13, 2024.
- Correspondence: Development Proposal for Montclair Golf Club, 25 Prospect Avenue, West Orange, NJ 07052, Block 151, Lot 1, dated January 10, 2024.
- "Stormwater Maintenance Plan for Montclair Golf Club Halfway House, Golf Building Addition, and Parking Lot Improvements, Township of West Orange, Essex County, New Jersey," dated January 17, 2024, Prepared by Langan Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc.
- "Stormwater Management Report for Montclair Golf Club Halfway House, Golf Building Addition, and Parking Lot Improvements, Township of West Orange, Essex County, New Jersey," dated January 17, 2024, prepared by Langan Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc.
- Architectural Plans titled "Montclair Golf Club – Halfway House, Proposed Halfway House, 25 Prospect Avenue, West Orange, NJ," consisting of four (4) sheets, dated 5-03-2024, prepared by Frank J. Rawding, AIA, Architects – Planners.

- Site Plans titled Montclair Golf Club, Halfway House, Golf Building Addition, And Parking Lot Improvements, consisting of twenty-six (26) sheets, dated 1-17-2024 with revision dated 5-3-2024, prepared by Michael J. Fowler, PE of Langan Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc.
- Site Plans titled “Existing Parking Count Figure, Montclair Golf Club – Halfway House, Proposed Halfway House, Golf Building Addition & Parking Lot Improvements, West Orange, Essex County, New Jersey”, consisting of two (2) sheets, dated 5-03-2024, prepared by Langan Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc.
- Site Plan Review Advisory Board Meeting Review held on April 9, 2024.

Project Summary

On property located in the Township’s ***R-2 (One-Family Dwellings on 40,000-SF Lots)***, the applicant, ***Montclair Golf Club***, proposes to demolish portions of the existing pool complex (which is no longer in use) and renovate and expand the existing golf building (which includes the pro shop, offices, bag room, indoor practice area, etc.). The Applicant also proposes to make various parking, lighting and landscaping improvements to enhance the existing parking lot and the main entrance to the clubhouse building.

The existing golf course, club house and proposed accessory halfway house and golf building **are permitted** in the R-2 District. However, the proposed development does not meet all the bulk and design requirements for the District. Site plan approval is required for this application.

Required Variances

Accessory
Building Height
(Halfway House) –

Pursuant to the Township of West Orange Zoning Ordinance **§25-8.1(f)**, an accessory building in a residential zone shall not be taller than 1½ stories or 15-feet in height, and the applicant proposes a building height of 22-feet for the halfway house. **A C-variance is required to allow a greater accessory building height than permitted.**

Accessory Building Height (Golf Building) –	Pursuant to the Township of West Orange Zoning Ordinance §25-8.1(f) , an accessory building in a residential zone shall not be taller than 1½ stories or <u>15-feet</u> in height, and the applicant proposes a building height of <u>24-feet</u> for the golf building. A C-variance is required to allow a greater accessory building height than permitted.
Solid Wall in Front Yard –	Pursuant to the Township of West Orange Zoning Ordinance §25-8.4(a) , walls and fences which are not more than 50% percent solid are permitted anywhere on the property, in all districts, provided they are not higher than 4-feet, and the applicant proposes a 100% solid wall in the front yard. A C-variance is required to allow a solid wall in the front yard of the site.

Project Description

The subject site encompasses a total of 277-acres, 189-acres of which is located within the Township of West Orange and the remainder located to the north in the adjacent Township of Verona. The applicant proposes to renovate and expand the existing golf building, which is located to the south of the main club house. The existing 3,240-SF structure will be enlarged by an 1,800-SF expansion of the structure on the western side and an additional 1,560-SF of covered walkways on the southern side.

Floor plans of the expanded building show a series of proposed service area all extending out from the proposed location of the pro shop in the northeastern area of the building. In the southeastern area is proposed a club/cart cleaning area and in the opposite southwestern area is proposed two (2) golf simulator areas and an adjacent training area. In the northwestern corner are proposed the Pro and Assistant Pro offices.

The golf building will be accessible from the paver-paved walkway between the clubhouse and locker room and the golf building. On the southern side of the building is proposed a golf cart staging area.

To the south and west of the expanded golf building, the applicant proposes to demolish the original pool complex, which is no longer in use, and replace it with a new 840-SF halfway house building, surrounded by an addition 1,771-SF of outdoor covered space. The new halfway house will include restrooms and a proposed snack bar. The area surrounding the building will be comprised of covered seating areas and walkways, which will extend around the entire structure. The paver-paved outdoor seating area will extend to the

northern side of the building to a proposed walkway, which will lead to a proposed circular seating area around a proposed fire pit.

There is a proposed paved walkway between the golf building and the proposed halfway house, adjacent to the golf cart staging area.

The applicant also proposes site improvements around the parking areas on the site. This includes the reconfiguration of the parking in the front yard of the site, on the Prospect Avenue frontage. The area in the front yard opposite the entry to the club house building will be reconfigured between the ingress and egress of the existing circular driveway.

A solid 3-foot-tall wall is proposed along the property line in this area, extending between the ingress to the circular driveway to the existing ingress/egress further to the south and then to the existing caddy shack. The six (6) existing parking stalls located between the southernmost ingress/egress and the caddy shack, will be eliminated and the curbed area reconfigured to facilitate ingress/egress.

In the front yard directly opposite the club house entry, fifteen (15) new parking stalls are proposed, with a two-way access driveway extending along the front property line and the proposed new wall and back onto the circular driveway.

Exterior

- The exterior of the proposed halfway house building and golf building expansion will be finished in a manner, complementary to the existing structures on the site.

Landscaping

- One (1) Red Sunset Maple tree is proposed on the Prospect Avenue frontage adjacent to the existing caddy shack.
- Two (2) Seedless Sweetgum trees are proposed, with one on the Prospect Avenue frontage and the other southern side of the golf building.
- Two (2) Eastern Redbud Multi-Trunk ornamental trees are proposed on the Prospect Avenue frontage adjacent to the existing caddy shack.
- Fifty-six (56) Compact Burning Bush are proposed in the area surrounding the golf cart staging area.
- Forty-two (42) Bar Harbor Creeping Juniper are proposed on the Prospect Avenue frontage.
- Eighteen (18) Russian Cypress shrubs are proposed on the Prospect Avenue frontage.
- Fifty-three (53) Gro-low Fragrant Sumac shrubs are proposed in the area between the golf building and the new halfway house.

- Eighty-six (86) Broomsedge Bluestem ornamental grass is proposed in the area surrounding the golf building and the new halfway house.
- Two hundred and twenty-six (226) Little Bluestem ornamental grass is proposed in the area surrounding the new halfway house.

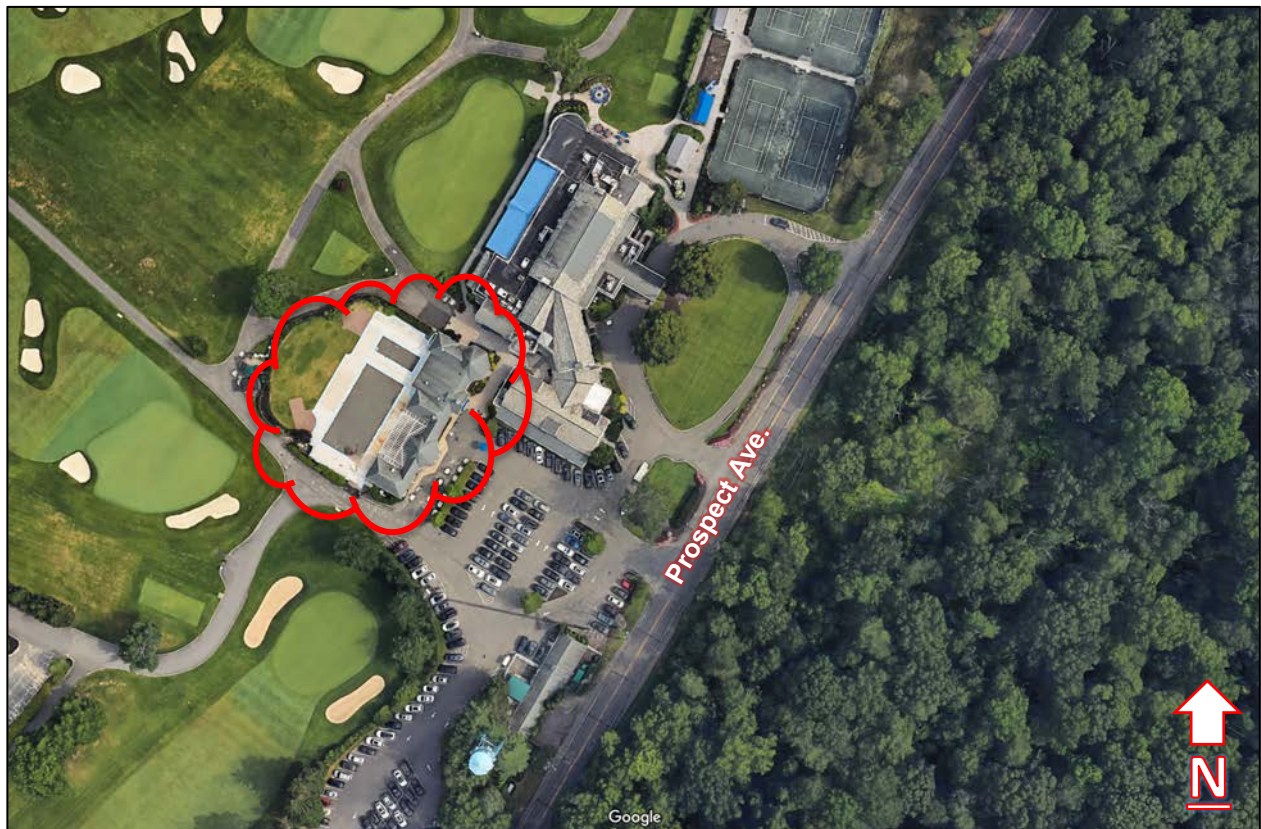
Lighting

- Three (3) BK Lighting (Yukon LED) Step-light for seat wall light fixture are proposed in the seating area around the proposed fire pit on the northern side of the halfway house.
- Five (5) Eaton Lighting (UTLD-AF Traditionaire LED) Post-Top single area light fixtures are proposed, with three (3) proposed in the area to the north of the halfway house and two (2) in the parking area on the eastern (street) frontage.
- Seven (7) Eaton Lighting (UTLD-AF Traditionaire LED) Post-Top single area light fixtures are proposed, with two (2) proposed in the area to the south of the golf building and three (3) in the parking area on the eastern (street) frontage.
- Four (4) Eaton Lighting (UTLD-AF Traditionaire LED) Post-Top single area light fixtures are proposed, with two (2) proposed in the area to the east of the golf building and two (2) in the parking area on the eastern (street) frontage.
- Seven (7) Eaton Lighting (Lexington LED) Post-Top single area light fixtures are proposed, on top of the proposed wall on the street frontage.

Site & Area Description

Street Address: 25 Prospect Avenue
Block & Lot: Block 151, Lot 1
Zoning District: R-2 (One-Family Dwellings on 40,000-SF Lots) Zone
Total Site Area: 189-Acres in West Orange (88-Acres in Verona)

Location Map



Location Map – The subject site is located on the western side of Prospect Avenue. The site encompasses over 189-acres within the Township of West Orange. Pictured here is the main entry to the site from Prospect Avenue and the location of the proposed development on the site, which is circled in red on the google map. The circled area includes the existing golf building, which will be expanded, and the area of the original pools and building, which will be demolished and the location of the proposed new halfway house. To the east, across Prospect Avenue from the site is the Eagle Rock Reservation.

Photo Survey



Photo 1: View of the subject property located at 25 Prospect Avenue. Highlighted in red is area of the proposed golf building expansion and new halfway house facility.



Photo 2: View of the subject site from the southwest, showing the area of the proposed development.



Photo 3: The area on the western side of the existing golf building, where the proposed expansion will be constructed.



Photo 4: View from the west showing the rear of the existing golf building and the original pool building that will be demolished.



Photo 5: View looking west showing the location of the proposed halfway house.



Photo 6: View looking north across the front yard at the area in front of the club house, where 15 new parking stalls area proposed.



Photo 7: View of the front yard from the north on Prospect Avenue. The applicant proposes to install 15 new parking stalls in this area as well as a new 3-foot-tall wall along the property.



Photo 8: View looking south on Prospect Avenue towards the ingress/egress points onto and off the site.



Photo 9: View of two of the three ingress/egress points onto and off the site. The proposed 3-foot-tall wall will span the distance between each ingress/egress point.

Planning Considerations

The subject site is located within the **R-2 (One-Family Dwellings on 40,000-SF Lots) District**. Among the permitted principal uses in this district are:

- One-Family Detached Dwellings
- Water Reservoir, Well Tower, Filter Bed
- Federal, State, County or Township Buildings
- Golf Course and Golf Club House
- Farm, Nursery, Greenhouse and Similar Uses
- Hospitals
- Senior Citizens Housing Projects (as defined in Sect. 25.4)

The chart below has been created to identify bulk deficiencies.

Standard	Permitted/Required (R-2 District)	Proposed	Variance Required
Use	Golf Course & Customary Accessory Buildings and Structures	Golf Course Accessory Buildings (Golf Building & Halfway House)	No
Min. Lot Area	40,000-SF	189-Acres	No
Max. Building Height (Main Building)	2.5-Stories / 35-feet	2.5-Stories / 34.6-feet	No / No
Max. Building Height (Accessory Building)	1½ -Stories / 15-Feet	Golf Bldg.: 1-Story / 24-Feet Halfway House.: 1-Story / 22-Feet	No / Yes No / Yes
Min. Lot Width	125-feet	±4,200-SF (Approx.)	No
Min. Front Yard Setback	35-Feet	Club House: 90-Feet Golf Bldg.: 200-Feet Halfway House.: 323-Feet	No No No
Min Side Yard Setback	20-Feet (Each Side)	Club House: 1,600-Ft / 2,300-Ft Golf Bldg.: 1,500-Feet Halfway House.: 1,445-Feet	No No No
Min Rear Yard Setback	45-Feet	±3,400-SF (Approx.)	No
Min. Distance from Principal Building	15-Feet	Golf Bldg.: 22-Feet Halfway House.: 133-Feet	No No

Max. Building Coverage	20%	0.27%	No
Max. Lot Coverage	30%	0.9%	No
Max. Fence Height in Front Yard	4-Feet	3-Feet	No
Max. Fence Opacity	50%	100%	Yes
Min. Off-Street Parking	324-Spaces (Based on a previously granted variance)	387-Spaces	No
Max. Parking in Front Yard	30%	15.5%	No

Standards for Granting Variance Relief

C - (Bulk) Variances

The Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) at **N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70c** sets forth the standards for variances from the bulk regulations of a zoning ordinance.

C(1) Variance - The Board must find that there is either undue hardship or practical hardship with the strict application of the zoning requirements as stipulated in the Zoning & Land Use Regulations, as a result of:

- a) exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific property, or
- b) by reason of exceptional topographic conditions or physical features uniquely affecting a specific piece of property or
- c) by reason of an extraordinary and exceptional situation uniquely affecting a specific piece of property or the structures lawfully existing thereon.

C(2) Variance – The Board must find that the proposed deviation from the Zoning & Land Use Regulations will advance the purposes of the MLUL and that the variance can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good, that the benefits of the deviation would substantially outweigh any detriment. The benefits identified in granting a C(2) variance must include benefits to the community as a whole, not only the applicant or the property owner. Here too, the Board must be satisfied that the variance can be granted “without substantial detriment to the public good” and “without substantial impairment to the intent and purpose of the zone plan and zoning ordinance” of the Township.

Planner's Comments

The applicant proposes to demolish the original pool complex (which is no longer in use) and renovate and expand the existing golf building (which includes the pro shop, offices, bag room, indoor practice area). The Applicant also proposes to make various parking, lighting and landscaping improvements to enhance the existing parking lot and the main entrance to the clubhouse building. The existing golf course, club house and proposed accessory halfway house and expanded golf building **are permitted** in the R-2 zone.

As detailed above in the Project Description, the existing golf building will be expanded on the western side, which will limit the visibility of the enlarged area of the structure from the street. Additionally, the proposed new halfway house will be constructed further to the west, where its visibility from the street will be obscured by landscaping in the existing parking.

The applicant will also reconfigure areas of the parking and circulation on the site. This was an area of concern expressed at the SPRAB meeting held to review this application. One of the more significant reconfigurations of parking and circulation on the site is the addition of fifteen (15) new parking stalls on the Prospect Avenue frontage, on the eastern side of the existing circular driveway in front the club house. These new spaces will be accessible from a 24-foot-wide two-way circulation aisle that runs in a north-south orientation between the stalls and the front property line.

In my opinion, the access to and from the new stalls presets a potential area of conflict between:

- (a) vehicles leaving the new parking (15-stall) area from the south,
- (b) vehicles existing from the circular driveway and from the parking areas further to the south and
- (c) vehicles entering the site from Prospect Avenue, through the center-located ingress/egress point.

These three flows of vehicles will all converge at the center-located ingress/egress point.

The applicant should consider making the circulation aisle that will access the new 15-stalls, one-way, south to north only. This will require individuals using these spaces to enter at the southern end and exist at the northern end, where they will then continue on the circular driveway and exist the site at the center-located ingress/egress point.

This center located ingress/egress should also be made an egress only, with separate left turn only and right turn only lanes, similar to the ingress/egress point to the south.

This configuration would effectively limit ingress onto the site to only two (2) points, the northernmost one-way access on to the circular driveway and the ingress/egress point to the south, with the center-located access point limited to egress only.

In addition to the above circulation and parking issues, the proposed development on the site will require the granting of variances to permit the following three (3) conditions:

Excessive Height of an Accessory Building (Golf House) – Whereas a maximum building height of 15-feet is permitted, the applicant proposes a height of 24-feet for the proposed golf building. **The portion of the existing building on to which the proposed expansion will be added, is itself higher than the 15-foot limitation. The existing roof/ridge line is approximately 20.2-feet in height. Additionally, there is an existing octagonal portion of the structure, which includes a roof that extends to the 24-foot height. However, in both instances, the existing building and the proposed expansion are one-story in height.**

Excessive Height of an Accessory Building (Halfway House) – Whereas a maximum building height of 15-feet is permitted, the applicant proposes a height of 22-feet for the proposed halfway house. **As indicated earlier, the location of the proposed halfway house is such that it will be obscured from a direct view from the street frontage, making the additional height not as apparent. Additionally, the proposed design is consistent with the design of the adjacent golf building. Notwithstanding this however, the applicant should provide testimony as to the need and justification for the proposed increased height.**

Solid Wall in Front Yard – Whereas walls and fences that are more than 50% solid are not permitted anywhere on the properties in any district, the applicant proposes a 100% solid wall in the front yard of the subject site. The applicant proposes a 3-foot-tall wall along the front property line of the site. **The applicant also proposes landscaping in front of the proposed wall (on the street side) so that there will only be limited visibility of the wall from the street. Because most of the parking for the golf course will be located in the front yard, the proposed wall will provide some buffering from the vehicles as well as their head lights. In my opinion, this is an improvement over the current situation, where the parking area is fully exposed to the street.**

Recommended Conditions of Approval

Should the Board be inclined to grant the requested variance relief in full or in part, or to approve the accompanying site plan, the following are recommended conditions that should be placed on the approvals.

1. The applicant shall comply with all conditions provided by the Board Engineer.

2. The applicant shall consider making the circulation aisle that will access the new 15-stalls, one-way, south to north only. This will require individuals using these spaces to enter at the southern end and exist at the northern end, where they will then continue on to the circular driveway and exist the site at the center-located ingress/egress point.

This center located ingress/egress shall also be made an egress only, with separate left turn only and right turn only lanes, similar to the ingress/egress point to the south.

This configuration would effectively limit ingress onto the site to only two (2) points, the northernmost one-way access on to the circular driveway and the ingress/egress point to the south, with the center-located access point limited to egress only.

3. The applicant shall provide testimony as to the need and justification for the proposed increased height of the accessory buildings, over the maximum height permitted.