

MEMORANDUM

TO: Township of West Orange Planning Board

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

RE: PB-24-16 - *350 Mt. Pleasant Avenue*, Essex Country Club
Block 156, Lot 1

DT: August 27, 2024

Status Complete

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 July 28, 2024.
- Previously approved ten (10) resolutions that are attached with the report.
 - Planning Board Resolution, PB-78-42, adopted on September 6, 1978, approving minor subdivision.
 - Planning Board Resolution, PB-79-36, approving site plan for additions to club house pro and shop.
 - Planning Board Resolution, PB-93-35, adopted on March 23, 1994, approving site plan for replacement of maintenance shed.
 - Planning Board Resolution, PB-96-27, adopted on February 5, 1997, approving site plan for pump station.
 - Planning Board Resolution, PB-00-19, adopted on February 15, 2001, approving site plan to reconstruct drive entrance to country club.

- Planning Board Resolution, PB-02-10, adopted on November 13, 2002, approving a site plan for removal of curved walls to construct a new shed storage, a pesticide building and a chain link fence.
- Planning Board Resolution, PB-03-18, adopted on January 7, 2004, approving soil removal permit.
- Planning Board Resolution, PB-14-04, adopted on July 2, 2014, approving site plan for additions to club house and associated parking variance.
- Planning Board Resolution, PB-23-09, adopted on December 6, 2023, approving amended final site plan approval with bulk variances and soil moving permit to modify existing golf course facilities.
- Planning Board Resolution, PB-23-09, adopted on May 1, 2024, approving amended site plan approval for construction of a new halfway house.
- Architectural Plans titled ECCC - Existing Pool House W/Pool Area and Kitchen Renovation, Essex County Club, West Orange, NJ, consisting of three (3) sheets, dated 07-03-2024, prepared by F.J. Rawding, AIA.
- Site Plans titled Site Plan, Pool Complex Site Plan Essex County Country Club, Township of West Orange, Essex County, NJ, Block 156, Lot 1, Tax Map Sheets 39, 39.01, 39.02 and 39.03, consisting of seven (7) sheets, dated 06-03-2024, prepared by Paul T. Calabrese, PE of Jarmel Kizel Architects and Engineers, Inc.
- Landscaping and lighting Plans titled Essex County Country Club, 350 Mt Pleasant Avenue, West Orange, NJ, consisting of three (3) sheets, dated 07/03/2024, prepared by Sponzilli Landscape Group Inc.
- Survey of Property situated at East Course, Essex County Country Club/350 Mt. Pleasant Avenue, Township of West Orange, Essex County, New Jersey, consisting of one (1) sheet, dated 10-27-1978, prepared by Stewart Associates, Inc.

Project Summary

On property located in the Township's *R-2 (One-Family Dwellings on 40,000-SF Lots)*, the applicant, Essex County Country Club proposes a number of improvements to an existing pool house building on the subject site. The improvements include the expansion of covered walkway, construction of an open-air covered bar area with a grill area, expansion of existing patio, and construction of pergola with seating underneath. The site currently contains several structures, including an existing golf course, clubhouse, tennis courts, swimming pool, pool house and a number of other accessory structures. The Applicant also proposes to make various lighting and landscaping improvements to enhance the existing pool house.

The pool house is an existing use on the site and is permitted in the R-2 District. However, the proposed improvements do not meet all the bulk and design requirements for the District. Site plan approval is required for this application.

Required Variance Relief

Accessory Building
Height (Open Air
Structure) –

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 17.83-feet for the golf building. **A C-variance is required to allow a greater accessory building height than permitted.**

Land Use Regulations & Requested Checklist Waivers

1. A waiver is required from West Orange application checklist item 13 that requires “metes and bounds description showing dimensions, bearings, curve data, length of tangents, radii, arcs, chords and central angles for all centerlines, and right of way, and centerline curves on streets if applicable.”
The applicant comments that the proposed site development is deep into the site property and therefore, there are no impacts to elements of item #13. Survey is provided.
Planner’s Comment: The applicant should provide an updated survey of the property.
2. A waiver is required from West Orange application checklist item 19 that requires “all proposed lot lines and area of lots in square feet if applicable.” As per **West Orange Code §202-29.2A(6)** “Length and bearings of the lot lines of the proposed project” is required.
The applicant comments that the proposed site development has no adjustments or impacts to the lot line and area of the site.
Planner’s Comment: No objection to this waiver.
3. A waiver is required from West Orange application checklist item 28 that requires “all existing street, water courses, flood plains, wetlands or other environmentally sensitive areas on and within 200’ of site.” As per **West Orange Code §202-29.2A(6)** “All existing structures and wooded areas within the site and within 200 feet thereof.”
The applicant comments that the proposed site development has no adjustments or impacts to the existing street, water courses, flood plains, wetland or any environmentally sensitive areas.
Planner’s Comment: No objection to this waiver.

4. A waiver is required from West Orange application checklist **item 29** that requires “existing right-of-way and/or easements on and within 200’ of tract.”
The applicant comments that the proposed site development has no adjustments or impacts to the existing right-of-way and/or easement on and within 200 ft of the tract.
Planner’s Comment: No objection to this waiver.
5. A waiver is required from West Orange application checklist **item 32** that requires “boundary, limits, nature and extent of wooded areas, specimen trees, and other significant physical features (detail may vary).”
The applicant comments that the proposed site development has no adjustments or impacts to the boundary, limit, nature and extent of wooded areas and other significant physical features of the site.
Planner’s Comment: No objection to this waiver.
6. A waiver is required from West Orange application checklist **item 46** that requires solid waste management plan. *The applicant comments that there are no changes to the existing solid waste management plan for the existing site. The proposed site improvement will keep the existing solid waste management plan.*
Planner’s Comment: No objection to this waiver.

Project Description

The subject site encompasses a total of 176.83-acres on the southwestern corner of the intersection of Mt. Pleasant and Prospect Avenues and has been developed with a golf course since 1887. The site also has frontage on Pleasant Valley Way to the northwest and Old Indian Road to the southwest. The site is occupied by the country club and the surrounding uses include another golf course, single-family houses, offices and other institutional uses.

On the northeastern side of the country club, on the Mt Pleasant Avenue frontage, is a commercial strip with various retail outlets, fitness gym, health facility and restaurants. Opposite to that is a residential area with predominantly single-family homes. The western side of the club comprises a sports club, a church, single family homes and a care community. Whereas on the eastern side of the club there is a nursing facility, health facility and single-family homes and the southern side is predominantly residential.

The applicant proposes to renovate the existing pool house facility on the subject site, which is inclusive of renovation of the interior of the one-story pool house building.

Floor plans of the pool house show the proposed kitchen renovation with the covered area bar as well as the exterior renovations on the front, back and poolside elevations. The open grill area is located on the northern side of the open-air structure along with the new face stone retaining wall and decking behind it, and the proposed operable trellis is towards the south of the structure. A covered service area with expanded covered walkway is also proposed towards the existing pool deck. The floor plans for the 542-SqFt kitchen area highlights the placement of the storage, workstations, refrigerators and other accessories.

The site plan of the pool house shows a proposed 17.83-foot-tall open-air structure adjacent to the existing pool house that will be covered with a standing seam metal roof and will have new columns with Azek wrap. Four (4) canopy structures are proposed on the southern side of the pool house.

A concrete area towards the northwestern side of the pool will be replaced with an 80-foot by 80-foot pergola structure forming a new seating area.

A six (6) inch vinyl fence (matching the existing fence) is proposed to be installed adjacent to the proposed open-air structure and pergola as well as towards the east side of the pool house building.

Expanded pavers and walkways totaling up to 4,885-SF are in various spots throughout the pool area that consists of the new air structure, under the three canopies towards the south of the pool house and continuing towards the smaller inground pool.

Two sets of new stairs with six (6) inch risers and twelve (12) inch treads towards the southwestern and northwestern side of the bigger inground pool connecting the two pools. The proposed ADA ramp is situated between the two stairways.

A self-locking gate is proposed that opens outwards, away from the pool to enter the pool area via the smaller inground pool.

The applicant also proposes a depressed curb towards the northeast of the pool house adjacent to the access aisle.

Exterior

- The exterior of the proposed pool house will be finished in a manner, complementary to the existing structures on the site. Towards the front elevation of the pool house, a new flat roof is proposed with composite railing.

Lighting

- Twenty-five (25) wall lights with glass shrouds are proposed in the new seating area and in front of the pool house.
- Eight (8) path lights with a stake mount are proposed towards the western side of the pool house and towards the southeastern side of the pool.



- Fourteen (14) brass bullet spotlights with a stake mount are proposed for the existing trees towards the southern side of the pool.
- Twenty-eight (28) bullet uplights are proposed towards the existing cherry trees.
- 140 ft bistro lights are proposed to be mounted on the four canopies near the south side of the pool.
- 280 ft strip light is proposed on the walls and steps by the pool.

Landscaping

- Seven (7) modern inch fiberglass square planters (24" sq. by 24" high) are proposed towards the new seating area and in front of the pool house.
- Ten (10) modern fiberglass tapered planters (36" round x 3' high) spread out throughout the existing swimming pools.
- Three (3) Crape Myrtle are proposed outside the pool area adjacent to the existing playground.
- Eleven (11) Limelight Hydrangea are proposed towards the eastern side of the pool house adjacent to the gravel area.
- Fourteen (14) Coral Drift Rose are proposed outside the pool area adjacent to the existing playground along with the Crape Myrtle.
- Sixteen (16) Gold Flame Spirea are proposed around the new open-air structure and at the corner of the pool house towards the northeast.
- One hundred and seven (117) Perennial are proposed outside the pool area surrounding the pool house.
- Seven (7) Kousa Dogwood, fourteen (14) Lo and Behold Blue Chip Butterfly Bush, sixteen (16) Winter Gem Boxwood, thirty-three (33) Endless Summer Hydrangea, thirteen (13) Anthony Waterer Spirea, ten (10) Spilled Wine Weigela, and seventeen (17) Dwarf Fountain Grass are proposed inside the pool area towards the southern end of the pool house adjacent to the canopy area.
- Three (3) Purple leaf European Beech and Thirty (30) Little Spire Russian Sage are proposed inside the pool area between the proposed staircase and ADA ramp.

Site & Area Description

Street Address: 350 Mt. Pleasant Avenue
Block & Lot: Block 83, Lot 1
Zoning District: R-2 (One-Family Dwellings on 40,000-SF Lots) District
Total Site Area: 176.83-acres

Location Map



Location Map – The property in question is outlined in red on the Google aerial map above. The location of the pool house is outlined in yellow. The subject site is located on the southwestern corner of the intersection of Mt. Pleasant and Prospect Avenues. Surrounding the site are a mix of residential and commercial uses.

Photo Survey



Photo 1: View of the subject property located at 315 350 Mt Pleasant Ave. Highlighted in yellow is the location of the proposed open-air structure.



Photo 2: View from the north showing the entrance to the pool area. It is situated between the inground pools.



Photo 3: View from the south showing the rear of the existing pool house building that will be renovated and the pool.



Photo 4: View from the south showing the smaller inground pool and the existing staircase where a new ADA ramp will be installed.



Photo 5: View from the south showing the rear of the existing pool house building that will be renovated and the pool along with the existing canopies.

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.

Required Standard	Permitted	Proposed	Variance Required
Use	Golf Course & Customary Accessory Buildings and Structures	Golf Course Accessory Buildings (Accessory structure and pool house))	No
Min. Lot Area	40,000-SF	176.8 acres	No
Max. Building Height (Stories / Feet)	2.5-Stories / 35-Feet	33.25 feet (Existing pool house)	No / No
Max, Accessory Structure Height	15-feet	17.8 feet	Yes
Min. Front Yard Setback	35-Feet	13-feet	No
Min Side Yard Setback	20-Feet (Each Side)	East Side: 65-Feet	No
Min. Side Front Yard	35-Feet	65-feet	No
Min Rear Yard Setback	45-Feet	65-Feet	No

Max. Building Coverage	20%	1%	No
Max. Lot Coverage	30%	7.1%	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: exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific property, or by reason of exceptional topographic conditions or physical features uniquely affecting a specific piece of property or 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 renovate an existing 1-story structure on the subject site, which has been used as a pool house. The improvements to the pool house include the expansion of the covered walkway, construction of an open-air covered bar area along with a grill area, expansion of the existing patio, and construction of pergola with seating underneath. The existing golf course, pool house and proposed accessory open-air structure **are permitted** in the R-2 zone.

As detailed above in the Project Description, the existing pool house building will have a new open-air structure where its visibility from the street will be obscured by landscaping in the existing parking lot.

Excessive Height of an Accessory Building (Open Air Structure) – Whereas a maximum building height of 15-feet is permitted, the applicant proposes a height of 17.8-feet for the proposed halfway house. However, the existing structure is non-conforming with a height of 15.5 feet. **As indicated earlier, the location of the proposed open air structure is such that it will be obscured from a direct view from the street frontage, making the additional height not as apparent. Notwithstanding this however, the applicant should provide testimony as to the need and justification for the proposed increased height.**

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 provide testimony as to the need and justification for the proposed increased height of the accessory buildings, over the maximum height permitted.
3. The property survey provided is outdated. The applicant shall provide an updated property survey.
4. As per **West Orange Code §202-29.2C(8)** the scale and north sign and key map relating the site to the streets in the surrounding area is required. The applicant shall update the plans with the required north sign.