



**Consulting & Municipal
ENGINEERS**

One Market Street, Suite 1F
Camden, NJ 08102
732.410.2651 ☎
www.cmeusa1.com 🌐

December 11, 2025

West Orange Township – Zoning Board
66 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052

Re: PSE&G Company – CME Planning Review #1
325 Mount Pleasant Avenue
Block 155, Lot 26.01
Zone: O-R Office Research, PURD, and R-5 zone
Our File No. WRZ0155.V04

Dear Chairman and Board Members:

1. Summary

The property is a 23+ acre site located at 325 Mount Pleasant Avenue, and is developed with an electric utility sub-station. The applicant proposes to upgrade the existing facilities to include new switchgear, and six 70-foot-tall lightning masts, among other equipment. A d-2 expansion of non-conforming use variance is required. Variances are also required for building height, front yard setback, lot coverage, and fence height.





West Orange Zoning Board
Re: 325 Mount Pleasant Avenue – PSE&G Company
CME Planning Review #1

December 11, 2025
Our File No. 115.VWRZ0155.04
Page 2

2. Project and Property Description

This is a supplemental planning review of this application. For additional information and project description, please see the initial planning report issued by the Nishuane Group dated August 12, 2024.

The property's address is located on Mount Pleasant Avenue but can be accessed by Mount Pleasant Avenue and Prospect Avenue. The property is 23.36 acres or (1,017,562 square feet) in area, and is currently developed, with an electrical switching station for Public Services Electric and Gas Company. It is located generally at the intersection of Mount Pleasant Avenue (NJ 10) and Prospect Avenue (CR-577).

Generally, the surrounding land uses are non-residential in nature. The property is adjacent to the Essex Green shopping center, LA Fitness, and an office building immediately to the northeast and 375 Mount Pleasant Avenue, a multi-tenant building containing medical offices to the south-west. Several commercial buildings including a gas station, Verizon Building, Chiropractor, Insurance Office, Daycare, and two residential homes to the east, along Prospect Ave. The Essex County Country Club is located south of the property.

The applicant is proposing to upgrade their facilities and construct a two-story 26kV switchgear and feeder reactors of 28 feet and 45 feet. Additionally, six 70-foot-tall lightning masts are proposed. The applicant also proposes replacing the existing 6-foot high perimeter fence with an 8-foot-high fence. The overall project disturbance is approximately 3.92 acres. The applicant proposed to remove 167 trees to accommodate the project on the site.

After several hearings before the Board, and discussions with objectors to the project, the applicant has revised the plans to include the following changes:

- The number of trees proposed to be removed has been reduced from 167 to 120.
- The number of "viable" trees to be removed has been reduced by 47, from 136 to 89.
- 220 replacement trees are proposed, matching the minimum requirement.
- Stormwater management infrastructure has been revised.

3. Zoning Compliance

The property is located within the Office Research (O-R), Planned Unit Residential Development (PURD), and Single Family (R-5) zone of the Township.

The PURD and R-5 Zone conditionally permit public utility buildings or structures. However, the proposed improvements are in the O-R Zone. Public utility buildings or structures are not a permitted use in the O-R Zone. As this is an existing use, a d-2 variance to permit the expansion of a non-conforming use will be required.



West Orange Zoning Board
Re: 325 Mount Pleasant Avenue – PSE&G Company
CME Planning Review #1

December 11, 2025
Our File No. 115.VWRZ0155.04
Page 3

4. Variances & Waivers Required

It appears that the following conditions are not in compliance with the Township's land development regulations and will require variance or design waiver relief from the Board to permit the project as proposed:

Variances:

- a. **§25 Attachment 2 Permitted Uses** – The use as a public utility building or structure is not a permitted principal use or conditional use in the O-R Zone.
- b. **§25 Attachment 3 Bulk Standards** – The maximum permitted height is 2 ½ stories and not exceeding 35 feet, where 28 foot and 45 foot feeder reactors and six 70-foot-tall lightning masts are proposed.
- c. **§25-7.1 Side Yard** – The minimum required side front yard setback for a corner lot is 100 feet, where 77.9 feet to the property line is proposed.
- d. **§25-7.1 Lot Coverage** – The maximum permitted impervious lot coverage is 30%, where the existing lot coverage is 41% and the proposed lot coverage is increased to 44%.
- e. **§25-8.4 Walls and Fences** – The maximum permitted fence height is six feet, a proposed new perimeter fence will be 8 feet in height.

5. Master Plan Considerations

The Township's Master Plan was last reexamined in December of 2019. The following goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Master Plan may be relevant to this application:

- Maintain the existing scale of the community.
- Protect natural features and environmental resources.

6. Planning Comments

- a. All comments provided in the previous planning report of the Nishuane Group, dated August 12, 2024, remain valid and should be addressed by the applicant.
- b. The applicant should provide testimony addressing the revisions to the plans that have been made as a result of previous discussions with the Board and with Township residents or staff.
- c. The application as proposed will require a D-2 use variance for to grant the expansion of a pre-existing non-conforming use in the O-R Zone. With any 'd' variance, the applicant



West Orange Zoning Board
Re: 325 Mount Pleasant Avenue – PSE&G Company
CME Planning Review #1

December 11, 2025
Our File No. 115.VWRZ0155.04
Page 4

has an enhanced burden of proof to demonstrate that both the positive and negative criteria can be satisfied before the Board can grant a 'd' variance:

- i. Positive Criteria: The applicant must show that there are special reasons to grant the variance. Special reasons can come in one of three forms: 1) that there is an economic inutility in using the property for one of the permitted uses in the district; 2) that the proposed use is considered "inherently beneficial"; or 3) that the proposed use would promote the general welfare by advancing one of the purposes of zoning, and that the site is particularly suited for the use.
 - ii. Negative Criteria: The applicant must show that the proposed use will not have a substantial detrimental impact on the public good, and will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the zone plan.
- d. We note that public utility infrastructure has been previously found by the courts to be considered "inherently beneficial". In these particular cases the positive criteria is considered to be presumptively satisfied. The applicant does not need to demonstrate that this site is particularly suitable for a public utility use.
 - e. For a d-2 variance application should be evaluated on whether the site can adequately accommodate the proposed expansion and whether the expansion of the public utility building or structure would satisfy the negative criteria.
 - f. The application as proposed will also require several bulk or 'c' variances. The applicant must satisfy both the positive and negative criteria for each of these variances as well:
 - g. The applicant shall provide testimony addressing the tree replacement requirements of the Township code at §28-8. It is noted that the applicant has reduced the number of trees proposed for removal to 120. Additionally, the ordinance permits the applicant to provide payment in lieu of replacement plantings. We defer any further comments on tree removal and replacement to the Township Forester.
 - h. The applicant should confirm whether steep slopes exist on the property. Available data from Rowan University's NJ Map indicates that steep slopes may be present along the property's borders.
 - i. We defer any comment on grading, drainage, utilities, and stormwater management to the Board Engineer.
 - j. The applicant should address the status of any necessary outside agency approvals.



**Consulting & Municipal
ENGINEERS**

West Orange Zoning Board
Re: 325 Mount Pleasant Avenue – PSE&G Company
CME Planning Review #1

December 11, 2025
Our File No. 115.VWRZ0155.04
Page 5

If you have any questions about this report, please do not hesitate to reach out to our office.

Sincerely,

CME Associates

Christopher N. Dochney – PP, AICP
Program Manager
Zoning Board Planner

CD

cc: Geniece Gary-Adams – Township Zoning Official
Zayibeth Carballo, PE, PLS, PP – Township Engineer
Steven Warner, Esq. – Board Attorney
Alex Fisher, Esq. – Board Attorney
John Hess, PE, PP, CME – Board Engineer
Ryan MacNeill, PE – Board Engineer
Public Service Electric & Gas Company – Applicant
Jennifer M Porter, Esq. – Applicant's Attorney
Michael J. Blake, PE – Applicant's Engineer
Johnathan M. Copa, PE – Applicant's Engineer
Noreen Merainer, PP, PMP – Applicant's Planner
Michael D. Regsdale, PLS – Applicant's Surveyor
John R. Futey II, LLA – Applicant's Landscape Architect
Michael R. Conaway, PE – Applicant's Acoustical Engineer



West Orange Zoning Board
Re: 325 Mount Pleasant Avenue – PSE&G Company
CME Planning Review #1

December 11, 2025
Our File No. 115.VWRZ0155.04
Page 6

7. Materials Submitted

The following supplemental materials have been submitted and reviewed in association with this application:

- Thirteen (13) page Stormwater Management Plan prepared by Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company, Inc., dated December 8, 2025;
- One (1) page memo describing the updated Tree Removal Plan from the Switching Station prepared by PS&S dated December 8, 2025;
- Two (2) page transmittal letter prepared by PSE&G dated December 8, 2025;
- Five (5) page Concept Plan prepared by PSE&G dated December 3, 2025.