



**Consulting & Municipal
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February 18, 2026

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

**Re: Montclair Stables, LLC (Application No. ZB-25-02)
Preliminary & Final Site Plan with 'C' and 'D' Variances
12-22 Woodland Avenue
Block 152.02, Lots 176, 176 and 186
Our File: 115.WRZ0152.V06**

Dear Chairman and Board Members,

1. Property and Project Description

The subject property is located at 12 Woodland Avenue, and is approximately 3.46 acres in size. The site is currently developed with the former Essex Equestrian Center horse training / riding facility, consisting of stables, and riding areas, as well as a parking area and a single family residence.

The applicant is proposing to remove the residential structure and expand the outdoor riding area on the site, along with new outdoor paddock spaces, and parking improvements.

This is a supplemental review to the initial planning review letter issued by the Nishuane Group dated April 1, 2025. For additional information on planning and zoning issues, please refer to that report.

The applicant has provided supplemental and revised information based on previous feedback from the Board and its professionals. The supplemental information indicates the following revisions:

- ***The applicant no longer proposes use of an existing driveway which utilized the ROW of Nicholas Avenue. All access to the facility will be through Woodland Avenue***
- ***A tree inventory and removal plan have been provided***
- ***Identification of steep slopes and analysis of disturbance is now included with the plans***
- ***Additional fence details have been provided***

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NJ CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORIZATION NO. 24GA28359000 (CME)
NJ CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORIZATION NO. 24GA28412500 (ARTHEON)

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2. Variances and Waivers Required

The subject property is zoned within the R-1 and the R-5 district. However, most of the property is primarily within the R-1 zoning district.

The permitted principal uses in the R-1 district are one family, detached dwelling, water reservoir, well tower, filter bed, federal, state, county or township buildings, golf courses and golf club houses, farm, nursery, greenhouse and similar uses, and hospitals.

The permitted principal uses in the R-5 district are the same as the R-1 district, however the R-5 district also permits Senior Citizen Housing.

All development in the R-1 District is subject to the following bulk requirements:

R-1 District Bulk Standards			
	Required / Permitted	Proposed Block 152.02. Lots 176 & 179 and Lot 186	Conforming
Maximum Height	2 ½ stories / 35 feet	2 stories < 35 feet	C
Minimum Lot Area	80, 000 s.f.	150,302 s.f.	C
Minimum Lot Width	150 feet	475 feet	C
Minimum Front Yard	40 feet		
Barn to Woodland Ave		29.62 feet	ENC
Barn to Nicholas Ave		41.38 feet	C
Arena to Woodland Ave		29.33 feet	ENC
Arena to Nicholas Ave		9.93 feet	ENC
Minimum Side Yard	25 feet + 25 feet		
Barn		65.91 feet	C
Arena		179.09 feet	C
Minimum Rear Yard	50 feet	N/A	N/A



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R-1 District Bulk Standards			
	Required / Permitted	Proposed Block 152.02. Lots 176 & 179 and Lot 186	Conforming
Maximum Building Coverage	20%	25.38% (Existing) 24.67% (Proposed)	ENC
Maximum Lot Coverage	30%	40.28 (Existing) 35.95% (Proposed)	ENC
(C) = Conforming (V) = Variance; (ENC) = Existing Non-Conformity			

Off-street parking and loading

A horse-training facility does not have any specific parking requirements. However, section § 25-12.2(b)(2) of the Township Zoning code states that if no parking requirements are listed then the approving authority at its discretion may establish adequate parking requirements, based on industry standards.

The latest edition of the Industry Transportation Engineers manual notes that 1 parking space is required per four horse stalls for equestrian centers and riding academies. The applicant's planner in a report dated February 5, 2025 states there will be 3 or 4 horses onsite, therefore requiring a minimum of three parking spaces. There are 11 parking spaces proposed, including 9 traditional parking spaces and 2 ADA compliant parking spaces.

3. Variances and Waivers Required

It appears that the following variances from the Township land development code may be required:

Variances:

- §25 Attachment 2: Permitted Principal Use (R-1) & (R-5)** – A horse riding and training facility is not listed as a permitted principal use in the R-1 and R-5 zoning districts.
- §25-9.2 Housing of Animals** – Buildings for housing more than three domestic animals is permitted only as an accessory use within a residential district, where the proposed barn and associated riding arenas can be considered the principal use of the site.
- §25 Attachment 3: Minimum Front Yard Setback** – A minimum front yard setback of 40 feet is required, whereas the barn is located 29.32 feet from Woodland Avenue, the arena is situated 29.33 feet from Woodland Avenue, and the arena maintains a setback of 9.93 feet from Nicholas Avenue. These are all existing conditions and remain unchanged by the proposed development.



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- d. **§25 Attachment 3: Maximum Building Coverage** – A maximum building coverage of 20 percent is permitted, whereas the existing development results in a building coverage of 25.38 percent. The prior application proposed a building coverage of 24.73 percent; however, the elimination of the proposed gravel driveway improvements reduces impervious coverage by approximately 80 square feet. As revised, the proposal results in a building coverage of 24.67 percent.
- e. **§25 Attachment 3: Maximum Lot Coverage** – The maximum permitted lot coverage is 30%, where 40.28 currently exists and 35.95% is proposed. The reduction of approximately 6,430 s.f. of impervious surfaces on the property brings the property closer to conformance with the zoning code.
- f. **§25-8.4(b) Solid Walls and Fences** – The proposed project proposes to construct a 5-foot opaque fence in the front yard along the northeast portion of the property.
- g. **§ 25-12.1(i) Parking Area Entrances or Exit** – Entrances or exits from parking areas are required to be 50 feet from any residential district, whereas the parking areas are situated within the R-5 residential district and are within 50 feet from residences in the R-5 zoning district.

Design Waivers

- a. **§10-12.3.(a) Keeping of Animals** – animal stalls, coops, pens, runways, or enclosures are required to be setback at least 50 feet from any property line, where paddock enclosures are proposed within the required setback along the northeast and northwest lot lines.
- b. **§ 25-12.1(e) Parking Area Screening** – Parking areas are required to be screened on any side which adjoins or faces premises situated in any residence district, where there is no screening proposed.

4. Planning Comments

- a. The applicant should provide testimony discussing the nature and scope of the application, including the anticipated users of the horse stables, parking areas, and barns.
- b. The applicant should provide a summary of the revisions to the plans that have been made as a result of previous discussions with the Board and the review letters of the professionals.
- c. The application as proposed will require a d-2 use variance, to permit the expansion of a horse-training facility in the R-1 and R-5 zoning districts. The applicant must satisfy both the positive and negative criteria for each of these variances:
 - 1. **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 a practical



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- hardship or burden and economic inutility in using the site for one of the permitted uses; 2) that the proposed use is inherently beneficial; or 3) that the proposed use will promote the general welfare by advancing one of the purposes of zoning, and that the site is particularly suitable for the use.
2. Negative Criteria: The applicant must show that the variance can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good, and without substantially impairing the intent and purpose of the zone plan.
- d. For any d-2 expansion of a non-conforming use, the focus of the applicant's testimony and the Board's consideration should be on the expansion of the use, and not the use itself in general. The applicant must show that the site can reasonably accommodate the expansion while still satisfying the negative criteria. The applicant does not necessarily need to demonstrate that this site is particularly suited for an equestrian facility.
 - e. Several bulk variances are required of this application as proposed. The applicant must satisfy both the positive and negative criteria for each of these variances:
 1. Positive Criteria: The applicant must show that either there is an undue hardship (practical difficulty) in conforming to the code (c-1 hardship), or that the proposed conditions represent a preferable alternative to conforming to the standards of the code, that the purposes of zoning will be advanced, and that the benefits of the deviation would outweigh any detrimental impacts (c-2 flexible).
 2. Negative Criteria: The applicant must show that the variance can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good, and without substantially impairing the intent and purpose of the zone plan.
 - f. The applicant should clarify if it is the intent that Block 152.02. Lots 176, 179, and Lot 186 are merged to create a single parcel, or if it is intended to retain the overall tract as three lots rather than one.
 - g. The applicant should provide testimony addressing steep slopes identified on the property, and any disturbance of slopes.
 - h. We defer any comment on grading, drainage, utilities, and stormwater management to the Board Engineer.
 - i. Any approval should be conditioned upon receipt of all required outside agency permits and/or approvals



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Should you have any questions or require any additional information with regard to the above matter, please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Sincerely,

CME Associates

Christopher N. Dochney, PP, AICP
Zoning Board Planner

cc: Geniece Gary-Adams – Zoning Official
Zayibeth Carballo, PE, PLS, PP – Municipal Engineer
Steven Warner, Esq. – Zoning Board Attorney
John J. Hess, PE, PP, CME – Zoning Board Engineer
Montclair Stables, LLC – Applicant
Joesph M. Wenzel, Esq. – Applicant's Attorney
Robert Cunningham, PE – Applicant's Engineer
Matthew J. Seckler, PE, PP, PTOE – Applicant's Planner
John Olivo, LLA - Applicant's Landscape Architect



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Our office has received for review the following documents which were submitted in support of the above referenced application for Preliminary and Final Site Plan approval with 'C' and 'D' Variances, Soil Removal Permit and Tree Removal Permit:

- A set of Tree Replacement Plans prepared by Bosenberg Landscape Architecture, dated December 27, 2024, and last revised on January 31, 2026.
- A nine (9) sheet set of site plans prepared by Robert M. Cunningham, P.E. of Cunningham Engineering & Design, LLC last revised on January 31, 2026
- A three (3) sheet set of Cut and Fill plans prepared by Robert M. Cunningham, P.E. of Cunningham Engineering & Design, LLC and last revised on January 31, 2026
- A two (2) sheet set of Existing Conditions Steep Slopes Plan prepared by Robert M. Cunningham, P.E. of Cunningham Engineering & Design, LLC, and last revised on January 31, 2026.
- A copy of a letter from Robert M. Cunningham, PE from Cunningham Engineering & Design, LLC to the West Orange Zoning Board of Adjustment dated February 3, 2026, in regard to the revised application.
- A copy of a letter from Joesph M. Wenzel, Esq. from Friend & Wenzel Attorneys at Law to the West Orange Zoning Board of Adjustment dated February 4, 2026, in regard to the submitted documents for this application.