

VARIANCE REQUEST NARRATIVE

APPLICATION OF CRESTMONT COUNTRY CLUB Township of West Orange Planning Board 750 Eagle Rock Avenue; Block 174, Lots 1 and 1.01

March 10, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Crestmont Country Club ("Crestmont" and "Applicant") is requesting amended preliminary and final site plan approval to reconstruct the egress driveway from its existing parking area to Eagle Rock Avenue and to install a traffic signal at a proposed new egress driveway and Eagle Rock Avenue. The reconstruction will create a new four-way intersection, aligning Eagle Rock Avenue, the new egress driveway, and Oval Road. The project includes the construction of 36 additional parking spaces to serve Crestmont, retaining walls, and two small-scale bioretention basins that will improve stormwater management.

Located at 750 Eagle Rock Avenue, the approximately 146-acre property is located in the Township's R-2 zone. The proposed 3.95-acre 'area of disturbance' is located at the northern section of the project site with frontage on Eagle Rock Avenue.

RELIEF JUSTIFICATION

The applicant requests the following "c" variances:

1. § 25-12.1.b: Minimum distance from parking area curb to fencing, screening, or structure, 5 feet. Less than a 5-foot setback exists, 3-foot setback proposed.
 - "c(2)" variance: Benefit of being able to reconnect the parking field with the newly proposed driveway grading with a retaining wall, outweighs any de minimis impact involving a setback of six parking spaces and no impact on neighboring building or uses.
 - The proposed setback deviation for the guardrail/fence is on the east side of the proposed parking field adjacent to the modular building.
 - Protective measures for vehicular and pedestrian circulation, including a guiderail and fence along the wall, are less than 5 feet from the parking spaces.
2. § 25-12.2.b.1: Minimum number of parking spaces, 700. Permitted principal use of golf club house, considered a private club for determining the minimum number of parking spaces (1 space for each 45 square feet of gross-floor area (GFA); 256 parking spaces exist, 292 parking spaces (including credit for 4 electric EV parking spaces) proposed.
 - "c(2) variance: The driveway reconfiguration provides an opportunity to provide additional parking at the upper level and closer to the main facility to support events at Crestmont.
 - The 36 new parking spaces reduce the relief previously granted.
3. § 25-28.8.f.11: Maximum retaining wall height, 4 feet. Up to 21.5 feet height proposed along 1,381 linear feet of wall.

- “c(1)(b)” variance: Due to exceptional topographic conditions on the site, the proposed wall heights exceeding 4 feet are a function of overcoming the topographic relief across the site. The site grade at the new signalized intersection on Eagle Rock Avenue is elevation (el.) 538 while the existing and proposed parking fields on the site range from el. 565 to 557.
 - Additionally, the wall heights along Eagle Rock Avenue vary from 0 to 8 feet to minimize the impacts on the existing trees adjacent to the existing roadway.
 - The retaining walls are needed to create the new egress driveway and proposed “T” intersection, which is a significant safety improvement from existing conditions.
4. Variance requests related to topography and steep slope disturbance: All are “c(1)(b)” variances due to exceptional topographic conditions on the site.
- a. § 25-28.7.b.16: Minimum setback of proposed improvements to top of steep slope 10 percent to 30 percent, 50 feet. 10-foot setback proposed, relocated driveway and parking spaces are within 10 feet of top of steep slope 10 percent to 30 percent.
 - b. § 25-28.7.b.16: Minimum setback of proposed improvements to top of steep slope greater than 30 percent, 100 feet. 10-foot setback proposed, relocated driveway and parking spaces are within 10 feet of top of steep slopes that are greater than 30 percent.
 - c. § 25-28.8.b: Maximum permitted disturbed area of steep slope 25 percent or greater, 0 percent. 10.9 percent of the 151,136 square feet of 25 percent slopes, or 16,400 square feet (0.38 acres), of proposed disturbance.
 - d. § 25-28.8.f.8: Maximum driveway slope, 6 percent. 10.5 percent slope exists and to remain, 8.5 percent slope proposed.
 - Due to existing topography most grading activities will result in disturbances of the various slopes.
 - The project design integrates the proposed work into the landscape while minimizing disturbances to reduce the number of trees removed to the extent feasible.

The Applicant also requests a site plan waiver from § 28-4.b.4, removal of trees on slopes 10 percent or greater. The project proposes to remove 191 trees on slopes greater than 10 percent. The waiver justification is the same as for the steep slope disturbance and retaining wall variances previously referenced. The trees will be replaced in accord with the proposed Tree Restoration Plan (Drawing Nos. LP201 and LP202).

PURPOSES OF ZONING

Granting the requested relief will further the following purposes of zoning:

- a. To encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in this State, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare. The improvements will result in safety, circulation and aesthetic improvements on Eagle Rock Avenue, and the on-site stormwater management improvements will benefit the surrounding area. The project will contribute to improving access to the inclusionary housing development accessed from Oval Road, as well as to Crestmont.
- d. To ensure that the development of individual municipalities does not conflict with the development and general welfare of neighboring municipalities, the county and the State as a whole.

Roseland Borough and Essex County will also benefit from the improvements, including the traffic signal, driveway reconfiguration, and related Eagle Rock Avenue improvements.

- h. To encourage the location and design of transportation routes which will promote the free flow of traffic while discouraging location of such facilities and routes which result in congestion or blight.

The driveway realignment and traffic light installation improve circulation and safety on Eagle Rock Avenue.

- i. To promote a desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangement.

The tree replacement and site improvements improve the aesthetics along the Eagle Rock Avenue frontage.

- m. To encourage coordination of the various public and private procedures and activities shaping land development with a view of lessening the cost of such development and to the more efficient use of land.

Crestmont has worked with Essex County to provide land along its frontage to allow for roadway improvements without using eminent domain. The driveway realignment creates a four-way intersection with a traffic light and removes an existing egress driveway that would not otherwise align with the proposed traffic light.

NEGATIVE CRITERIA

No substantial detriment to the public good:

- Driveway realignment contributes to new four-way intersection with traffic light for more efficient circulation.
- Project improves on-site stormwater management, benefiting surrounding area.
- Site improvements do not result in an increased intensity of use and bring the total parking spaces closer to conformance.
- Tree replacement plan contributes to aesthetic improvements along Eagle Rock Avenue corridor.

No substantial impairment to zone plan or zoning ordinance:

- Permitted use in R-2 zoning district.
- Additional parking spaces decrease the existing nonconforming condition.
- The project improvements related to the four-way intersection and traffic light installation improve circulation on Eagle Rock Avenue and facilitate access to the inclusionary housing development, helping address the Township's affordable housing obligation.

Crestmont reserves the right to supplement this Variance Request Narrative with testimony at the hearing on this matter.