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MEMO TO: North Brunswick Township Planning Board

FROM: James C. Watson, P.E., PTOE *JCW*
Township Planning Board Engineer's Office

DATE: May 1, 2023

SUBJECT: **Conditional Use Application and Site Plan Waiver for
Gajanan Maharaj America Devotees Parivar
Review No. 1
Block 4.05, Lot 122.02
2-4-6 Towne Center Drive
Township of North Brunswick, Middlesex County, NJ
Application Number: 2657
Our File No.: PNOP0004.47**

Pursuant to our authorization, we have reviewed the application for the proposed Conditional Use and Site Plan Waiver for the Site located at Block 4.05, Lot 122.02, 2-4-6 Towne Center Drive in North Brunswick Township as submitted by Gajanan Maharaj America Devotees Parivar. The following information has been submitted to this office for review:

- A. Applicant's Transmittal Cover Letter, prepared by Borrus, Goldin, Foley, Vignuolo, Hyman, and Stahl, dated January 9, 2023, consisting of two (2) pages;
- B. Survey of Lot 122.02, Block 4.05, prepared by Richard G. Ruchalski, P.L.S., P.P., of Chester, Ploussas, Lisowsky Partnership, LLC, dated August 6, 2014, consisting of one (1) page;
- C. Floor Plan / Sketch, undated and untitled, consisting of one (1) page;
- D. Deed for Hidden Lake Towne Center dated June 9, 2003, consisting of five (5) pages;
- E. Variance Application dated December 12, 2022 consisting of eleven (11) pages;
- F. Certification of Complete Application, dated February 16 2023, consisting of one (1) page;
- G. Zoning Officer's Memorandum, dated February 9, 2023, consisting of four (4) pages;
- H. Various Township Application Forms and Documents.



North Brunswick Township Planning Board
Gajanan Maharaj America Devotees Parivar
Re: Review No. 1

May 1, 2023
Our File No. PNOP0004.47
Page 2

We offer the following for the Planning Board's consideration:

1. Summary of Application

The Applicant, Gajanan Maharaj America Devotees Parivar is seeking a Conditional Use Approval to convert 1,910 square feet of existing commercial space located within the Towne Center shopping center into a Place of Worship. The subject property identified as Block 4.05 Lot 122.05 in the Township Tax Maps is a ± 5.3 -acre property. The site is developed with three (3) two-story commercial buildings, a one-story garage, associated parking area, sidewalks, paver patio areas, landscape areas, a playground and associated site improvements. The subject site is located in the Planned Unit Development (PUD) Zone, wherein Places of Worship are a permitted Conditional Use. It should be noted that the site is surrounded by residential uses. No Variances have been identified by the Zoning Officer.

2. Zoning and Waivers

- (a) **Use:** As noted above, the proposed House of Worship is a permitted Conditional Use in the PUD Zone. As established by the Zoning Officer, the site meets all the of the conditions as stated in §205-113 Churches and Places of Worship. Conditional Uses must receive approval from the Planning Board.
- (b) **Site Plan Waiver:** Per §205-111 (B), all applications for Conditional Use shall require Site Plan approval. The Applicant is seeking a waiver from this requirement considering that no site improvements are proposed and the application only proposes to convert an existing commercial space of 1,910 square feet within an existing building into a Place of Worship. The Applicant proposes to accept the previously granted site plan approval for a commercial unit as satisfactory for the proposed Place of Worship. The Applicant should provide testimony which supports the site plan waiver request.

As noted in the Zoning Officer's Memorandum, the Hidden Lake Towne Center, LLC received Preliminary and Final Site Plan approval to convert the three (3) existing commercial buildings to residential buildings, consisting of 39 age-restricted apartments within the existing building footprints, in phases. Although construction of the age restricted apartments has not commenced, and the project is currently in the resolution compliance phase, the Applicant should clarify if the proposed residential conversion plan is expected to move forward and if so, explain how it may impact the proposed House of Worship.



North Brunswick Township Planning Board
Gajanan Maharaj America Devotees Parivar
Re: Review No. 1

May 1, 2023
Our File No. PNOP0004.47
Page 3

(c) Planning and Engineering Review:

- (i) **Operations:** The Applicant should provide testimony regarding the anticipated use and operations of the proposed Place of Worship. This should include the timing and number of services, anticipated number of patrons, and number of employees or volunteers on site. In addition, details should be provided relative to the potential for on-site classes and events such as religious study and youth programs or other such programs that may be proposed.
- (ii) **Off-Street Parking:** As noted in the Zoning Officers Memorandum, the subject site is developed with 211 existing parking spaces and the Applicant proposes to maintain the previously approved off street parking lot. It should be noted that the existing site plan parking calculations were based on the shopping center use. It should be noted that currently, in accordance with §205-100 (B) (20) Shopping center requires one parking space for each 150 square feet of gross floor area.

In accordance with §205-100 (B) (13) Auditoriums, churches, conference or concert halls, community centers and similar places of public assembly not having fixed seating facilities require one parking space for every four persons who may legally be admitted therein at one time under the state fire prevention laws. For the same uses with fixed seating facilities, §205-100 (14) states that one parking space for every four seats is required.

Testimony and should be provided regarding the total gross floor area, the number of fixed seats and/or expected number of attendees as it pertains to the adequacy of the existing available parking on-site. The review of on-site parking should consider the 39 approved age restricted residential apartment units, and the units which are proposed to be maintained as retail or commercial at full capacity. Peak parking demands associated with potential special events at the proposed use should also be addressed.

- (iii) **Traffic:** The Applicant should provide Testimony relative to the expected trip generation associated with the proposed use during peak periods. Details regarding the anticipated daily activities on site should be provided. The potential for special events and the associated traffic should be discussed. Testimony describing the anticipated traffic impacts at the Willowbrook Drive and Pembroke Avenue site driveways should be addressed.
- (iv) **Noise:** As noted above, the timing of services and Place of Worship operations should be provided. Further, the Applicant should provide testimony regarding compliance with Section §205-108, relative to noise.



North Brunswick Township Planning Board
Gajanan Maharaj America Devotees Parivar
Re: Review No. 1

May 1, 2023
Our File No. PNOP0004.47
Page 4

- (v) **Refuse and Recycling:** The Applicant should provide Testimony regarding the refuse and recycle operations for the use. Details regarding the anticipated refuse disposal process and who shall be responsible for removal of garbage from site should be discussed.
 - (vi) **Signage:** No details on proposed signage for the property are provided to determine compliance. The Applicant should provide testimony relative to any signage that may be proposed.
 - (vii) **Site Lighting:** The Applicant should provide Testimony regarding the adequacy of the existing lighting on-site to accommodate the proposed use.
4. **Permits/Approvals:** The Applicant should discuss whether any additional permits/approvals are required by outside agencies.

We reserve the right to present additional comments pending the Testimony of the Applicant before the Board and the receipt of any plans and/or calculations (if applicable).

Should you have any questions concerning this matter, please do not hesitate to contact this office.

JCW/KEC

cc: Planning Board Members
Planning Board Attorney
Applicant's Attorney
Applicant