

STAFF REPORT - TOWN OF NORTH CASTLE PLANNING DEPARTMENT

October 2, 2023



APPLICATION NAME & NUMBER St. Nersess Armenian Seminary - 486 Bedford Road – Town Board Special Permit Amendment Request & Planning Board Site Plan [2023-035]	SBL 108.02-1-16
---	--------------------

MEETING DATE October 12, 2023	PROPERTY ADDRESS/LOCATION 486 Bedford Road, Armonk
----------------------------------	---

BRIEF SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The site contains an existing seminary approved by the Town in 2012. The Applicant is requesting to expand the seminary to include two additional married student apartments as well as a new two bedroom residence for a new dean.



PENDING ACTION:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plan Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Town Board Referral	<input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary Discussion
-----------------	---	--	---

EXISTING ZONING	EXISTING LAND USE	SURROUNDING ZONING & LAND USE	SITE IMPROVEMENTS	SIZE OF PROPERTY
R-2A	Existing Seminary	Residential and Institutional	New addition and new structure	5.55 acres

<p>PROPERTY HISTORY</p> <p>2012 – Town Board approved a seminary on the property that repurposed the existing structures on the site and included a new 8,400 s.f. theological center. The number of seminarians was limited to 14 students, a dean and family members.</p>	<p>COMPATIBILITY with the COMPREHENSIVE PLAN</p> <p>The Comprehensive Plan is relatively silent with respect to institutional uses but states the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional (nonprofit or municipal) uses make up 2.4% of the total land area. The largest of this type of use is Fordham University’s Louis Calder Center, a 113-acre biological field station located in a forested preserve next to Cedar Lake. Public school facilities also account for a large portion of the Town’s community resources land area. Smaller community uses include houses of worship, fire stations, libraries and government buildings.
--	--

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Given the low impact of existing operations upon the community, the Planning Department does not anticipate any additional negative impacts associated with the expansion request.
- The Applicant should be directed to address all staff and consultant’s comments.

<u>Procedural Comments</u>	<u>Staff Notes</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Proposed Action would be classified as an Unlisted Action pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). 2. The Planning Board will need to provide a recommendation with respect to the requested special use permit to the Town Board. 3. Pursuant to Section 12-18.A of the Town Code, all site development plans submitted to the Planning Board are required to be referred to the Architectural Review Board (ARB) for review and comment. 4. The application for special use permit approval requires referral to the Westchester County Planning Board pursuant to Section 239 L, M and N of the New York State General Municipal Law and Section 277.61 of the County Administrative Code. 5. The Planning Board is required to conduct a public hearing regarding the proposed site plan. 	<p>The Town Board declared their intent to act as Lead Agency.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Applicant will need to ensure that the project is designed as an aesthetically pleasing project. The Applicant has submitted floor plans for the new residence and addition; however, elevations of the new residence have not been submitted. The Applicant should submit elevations for review. The elevations for the proposed addition seem to be appropriate. 2. The subject property is located in a highly visible location. However, given the proposed location and design of the addition and new structure, it appears that the proposal would not create visual impacts and reflects the aesthetic importance of this location. 3. The Applicant should indicate whether the Westchester County Department of Health will require improvements to the existing septic system and/or well. 4. The original Town Board SUP specified the number of residences, students and occupancy. Given the proposed request, those SUP provisions will need to be updated. The Applicant should provide the Town Board with the necessary data to update those requirements. The existing SUP provisions are provided to the right. 5. The Applicant should demonstrate that Building Coverage does not exceed 20% of the Lot area and that gross land coverage does not exceed 50% of the lot area. 6. All new buildings are required to be set back from adjoining properties in residence districts, and street lines directly opposite properties in residence districts, a distance equal to at least twice the normally applicable front yard setback requirement for detached one-family dwellings in the zoning district in which they are located, but in no case less than 50 feet. 	<p>During the normal academic year(late August through late May, or approximately 300 days per year), operation of a seminary to include the academic instruction and residence of seminarians limited to a maximum resident occupancy of 15 people, plus the Dean and his immediate family. The resident occupancy would consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) residences for approximately 8 single residents in separate rooms (in the renovated and expanded main house); ii) 2 one bedroom small apartments (for married residents) in the renovated main barn; iii) 4 studios for resident and visiting faculty(in the rear of the renovated barn); iv) an on- site Dean' s residence(in the renovated secondary house) for the Dean and his immediate family. <p>The site plan should be revised to indicate whether the proposed addition and new structure comply with the Town Code. It appears that a variance will be required.</p>

7. All proposed elevations should depict proposed building height (average grade to roof midpoint) and maximum exterior wall height (lowest grade to roof midpoint).

8. The proposed buildings do not appear to meet the 100 foot setback requirement to each property line required in Section 355-40.H(3) of the Town Code. The plan shall be revised to depict proposed setback to the front, side and rear property lines.

It is noted, however, that the Town Board can reduce to setback requirement to 50 feet.

Based upon the plan, the proposed 30 foot side yard setback would require a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

9. In order to approve a special use permit, the Town Board must find that all of the following conditions and standards have been met:

- A. The location and size of the use, the nature and intensity of the operations involved in it or conducted in connection with it, the size of the site in relation to it and the location of the site with respect to streets giving access to it are such that it will be in harmony with the appropriate and orderly development of the district in which it is located and that it complies with all special requirements for such use established in this chapter.
- B. The location, nature and height of buildings, walls, fences and the nature and extent of existing or proposed plantings on the site are such that the use will not hinder or discourage the appropriate development and use of adjacent land and buildings.
- C. Operations in connection with any special use will not be more objectionable to nearby properties by reason of noise, fumes, vibration or other characteristics than would be the operations of any permitted uses not requiring a special permit.
- D. Parking areas will be of adequate size for the particular use, properly located and suitably screened from adjoining residential uses, and the entrance and exit drives shall be laid out so as to achieve maximum convenience and safety.
- E. Where required, the provisions of Chapter 177, Flood Damage Prevention.
- F. The Town Board finds that the proposed special permit use will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment.

The subject property is located within the R-2A Zoning District within close proximity are several institutional uses also located within the R-2A Zoning District including a church, a temple, the historical society campus as well as a High School. The amended use would be compatible with surrounding residential uses as well as other permitted uses in the R-2A Zoning District.

The proposed building height will comply with the requirements of the zoning code and the Planning Board previously required the implementation of a landscaping plan.

The seminary will not generate any noise, fumes or vibrations

The Town Code does not provide an off-street parking requirement for the seminary use. The Planning Board previously determined that 1 space for every 1,000 square feet of gross floor area was a reasonable and appropriate off-street parking requirement. In addition, the Applicant has entered into a reciprocal agreement with Congregation BNai Yisrael to provide overflow parking at each other's property when vehicular parking demand exceeds the number of spaces at the seminary or temple;

No development is proposed within a floodplain

The proposed modification is not expected to have a significant adverse effect upon the environment.