

**WEST HEMPFIELD TOWNSHIP  
3401 MARIETTA AVENUE  
LANCASTER, PA 17601**

**WEST HEMPFIELD TOWNSHIP ZONING HEARING BOARD  
November 11, 2014**

The West Hempfield Township Zoning Hearing Board met in the meeting room of the West Hempfield Township Building at 3401 Marietta Avenue, Lancaster, PA, on Tuesday, November 11 2014. Gary Lintner called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. Board members Daryl Peck and Tony Crocamo were also present, along with Rhonda Adams, Court Reporter; Julie Miller, Solicitor; Jodi Heffner, Zoning Officer; and Darlene Diffenderfer, Recording Secretary.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion: Tony Crocamo moved, seconded by Gary Lintner, to approve the minutes of the meeting held September 9, 2014 as presented. Carried 2-0. Mr. Peck abstained from voting because he was not present at the September meeting.

**Case 1197 – St. Mary’s Coptic Orthodox Church**

This application was submitted by St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, 3602 Marietta Avenue, Lancaster, PA for a variance of 5000 square feet for maximum building area for construction of a new worship building on property they own located on Summit Drive, zoned Traditional Village.

Jill Nagy, Esquire, 200 Spring Ridge Drive, Suite 202, Wyomissing, PA was present to represent the applicant. Also present were Magdi Kaldas, Secretary of the Board of St. Mary’s Church, Daniel Kaldas, 3022 Marietta Avenue, Lancaster, Professional Engineer and Selim Andrawis, Engineer, 146 Willow Street, East Brunswick, NJ. All three were sworn to provide testimony.

Ms. Nagy stated that St. Mary’s would be presenting new technical information at this hearing, but previous testimony given at the hearing held April 8, 2014 would still apply. She suggested that the Board take note of the previous testimony rather than have the witnesses repeat the same information.

Daniel Kaldas described Applicant Exhibit #1 as a rendering of a typical Coptic Orthodox Church. He stated the architecture typically includes steeples and domes which are symbolic of the heavens, barreled arches which are symbolic of Noah’s ark, and spires which are symbolic of the mast of a sailboat which takes the faithful on their spiritual journey. He stated their religious service is very symbolic which is intended to remove the worshipers from the outside world and move them inside and closer to God. Mr. Kaldas stated that the interior of the church holds many icons of the Saints to enhance their worship.

Mr. Kaldas added that St. Mary’s new structure would be similar to the rendering in Exhibit #1. He testified that this style of architecture is important for the church to maintain their religious requirements and carry on their services.

Mr. Kaldas described the interior design of the proposed structure through Applicant Exhibit #2 which is a typical floor plan of the interior. He stated they are required to have three separate altars for their services because each one can only be used once a day. He added that, besides the sanctuary, the interior will also include a baptism room, which must be on the north side of the structure, and what they

call a crying room which will be used by mothers and small children to allow them to observe the service, but not disturb the worship.

Mr. Kaldas stated that the need for multiple altars is reflected in the proposed size of the structure. He added that the location of all the rooms within the church are symbolic of their religious dogma.

Mr. Kaldas stated that approximately 150 to 200 families worship at the existing St. Mary's Church and those families would continue to worship at the new facility. He added that the current parking situation is a safety issue for the congregation, and the new facility would relieve that issue as well as the over-crowding of the existing church.

Mr. Kaldas testified that the proposed new facility would meet all other zoning requirements, but would still need Conditional Use approval from the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Kaldas stated that they are requesting the larger square footage to be able to build a structure that will meet all of their religious needs and allow them to have what they need for the dogma requirements. He stated that additions at a later time would compromise the requirements of their religion.

Mr. Kaldas presented Applicant Exhibit #3 and described it as a cross-section drawing of a typical structure. He stated it showed a three story concept based on a 10,000 square foot footprint with 10,000 square feet on each floor for a total of 30,000 square feet. He added that their proposed structure would have two stories with 15,000 square feet on each floor which would allow them to have the necessary barreled dome. He stated that their current plan shows the height of the building at the dome at 50 feet, but they will be able to reduce the height to meet the Zoning Ordinance limitation of 45 feet and still maintain the Coptic architecture.

Mr. Kaldas stated the second level would have a mezzanine level for overflow of people, especially on special occasions and holidays.

Mr. Kaldas stated that 15,000 square feet is the minimum size they could have and still meet their worship requirements and congregational needs. He added they are sacrificing some needs to meet the Township ordinance. He stated that the Coptic church will have its own distinct look, but will have positive impact on the neighborhood. He stated that a smaller size building would impact the required dome and they would be non-compliant with the dogma of the church.

Applicant Exhibit #4 was reviewed briefly. This Exhibit is a plot plan for the proposed new structure and new parking lot. Mr. Kaldas stated the new building would have seats for approximately 350 people which requires them to provide 177 parking spaces. Mr. Kaldas stated that the building will be placed on the lot with the tall spires on the west side of the lot and the back of the building with the barreled arches will face Summit Drive. He stated this placement is driven by the dogma requirement that the altars have to face East.

Applicant Exhibit #5 was presented which is a drawing of the face of the church building. Mr. Andrawis stated that the building height of 45 feet at the dome will be achieved by lowering the floor below ground several feet and making several architectural adjustments.

Mr. Andrawis stated that a footprint of 10,000 square feet would require three floors and they would lose the required dome and other required features. He stated that the footprint of 15,000 square feet will require only two floors and will allow them to meet the ordinance limitation of 45 feet in height. It was determined that the spires, at 100 feet, are exempt from the height requirement of the Ordinance.

It was noted that an underground detention basin under the parking lot will be utilized for storm water.

Mr. Lintner stated that he appreciated that the applicant came before the Board much better prepared than the previous presentation; that the previous presentation left too many unanswered questions.

Mr. Peck stated that he still had concerns about traffic with 177 parking spaces in the proposed parking lot. He stated that as the congregation grows, they could potentially have three services of 350 people at each service with all parking spaces filled at three different times. Mr. Andrawis stated that, if the congregation grew to that size, a second church would most likely be built in a nearby community. It was noted that the maximum traffic would be on Sundays when other traffic in the area is a lesser volume.

A copy of the minutes of the hearing held April 8, 2014 was submitted as Applicant Exhibit #6.

It was noted that services are also held on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Mr. Kaldas stated that they also hold services on Christmas Day and a midnight mass on the Saturday before Easter. He stated there are no services held on Easter Sunday.

Motion: Tony Crocamo moved, seconded by Daryl Peck, to grant a variance of 5000 square feet to Section 403.3.B.3.d to allow construction of a church with a maximum footprint of 15,000 square feet at 750 Summit Drive with the condition that all things be carried out as described before the Board. Carried 3-0.

#### **Case 1198 – Jeffrey J and Kim Gable**

Mr. Lintner stated that a letter had been received from the applicant requesting that this application be withdrawn.

Motion: Daryl Peck moved, seconded by Tony Crocamo, to accept the letter of withdrawal. Carried 3-0.

#### **Case 1199 – Jack D. Mason**

The contractor for Mr. Mason was present to present this case, but because neither Mr. Mason or any other equitable owner was present for the presentation the Board concurred they would be unable to hear this case at this time.

Motion: Daryl Peck moved, seconded by Tony Crocamo, to continue Case 1199 to the next meeting to be held Tuesday, December 9, 2014. Carried 3-0.

Zoning Hearing Board Minutes  
November 11, 2014  
Page 4

There being no further business to come before the Board, they adjourned to Executive Session at 9:00 PM to discuss a legal issue. That session adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Daryl S. Peck  
Secretary