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After 5 years of delays, zoning board OKs Bridgewater temple's expansion project

BY KARA L. RICHARDSON • STAFF WRITER • APRIL 28, 2009

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BRIDGEWATER — The Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of USA has the Board of Adjustment go-ahead to expand, ending a five-year standoff on the project.

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The Board of Adjustment unanimously approved a resolution outlining the conditions of the project at Route 202-206 and Old Farm Road during a meeting Tuesday night at the Somerset County Vocational & Technical School, a special location due to construction at the Bridgewater municipal complex.

During the discussion about the application, which only lasted about 30 minutes – far shorter than previous meetings on the matter, the board members and the temple's attorney Frank Patrino discussed final details about the agreement. Then, each member approved it.

When the discussion about the application was complete, a temple member snapped a photo of the Board of Adjustment and took more photos of members outside the meeting.

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"We're very happy with the outcome. It took five years and we finally got what we wanted."

Temple chairman Madhusudhan Rao Chava said outside the meeting.

Chava was disappointed on the many restrictions on the project. For example, the temple agreed to plant trees on a Route 202-206 neighbor's property (the only one surrounded on three sides by the temple's land), to block the view of the house of worship.

Bapi Ineedu, a founding trustee of the temple, was miffed that the temple needed to pay approximately \$30,000 into a sidewalk fund in lieu of building a walkway. He wanted to know how many other religious institutions in the township were subject to paying into the fund. He was also upset that the fence along the property could not have the temple's logo, nor the "Ohm" symbol on it.

"This is the kind of humiliation the board has subjected us to," Ineedu of Franklin Lakes said. He said the temple members decided to come to Bridgewater because of its central location. He said most people in the community have been supportive of the activities and expansion at the temple.

A few neighbors of the property sat in the back of the meeting room, with arms crossed, upset with the board's decision.

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bwtrez wrote:

Mr. Ineedu, I was at the meeting and if you had bothered to listen to the board it was stated that if you install the fence you either must 1) install a side walk, or 2) pay into the sidewalk fund. Your group was looking for a waiver because Sanofi had been granted one when they installed their fence. You were not granted the waiver because you are in a residential zone, Sanofi is not.

Your ohm symbols were denied because as stated in the previous board meeting by your representatives that the pillar top decorations on the fence were decorative in nature and not required by your religion. Given the amount of ornamentation that has been incorporated into your site plan (stated as required by your religion), the denial of the 'decorative' pillar tops keeps the fence more pleasing to the eye given the surroundings and location you chose to build in.

4/30/2009 10:18:52 PM

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victheguy1 wrote:

neighbors and resident of bridgewater cut your tree make your sheds bigger add to your house the town can't do anything these counsel member in the town do not live with out sin they do what they like to there property and you can't well you can now do what you like. Because if they come after me or my neighbog i will tell the news about the coussel man on my street and what he does to get away with not paying taxes eather they are bad

4/29/2009 1:17:58 PM

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rygalis wrote:

"He said most people in the community have been supportive of the activities and expansion at the temple."

I seriously question this statement. To the best of my knowledge the temple was never wanted by the residents in the area but under the threat of a lawsuit they had to allow it. So why would they be open to expansion of something that was never wanted in the first place?

4/29/2009 12:53:13 PM

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jojobeans wrote:

"Chava was disappointed on the many restrictions on the project. For example, the temple agreed to plant trees on a Route 202-206 neighbor's property (the only one surrounded on three sides by the temple's land), to block the view of the house of worship."

If you're unhappy about planting a few trees, then take your ugly-azz gold-domed doesn't-fit-in-this-area "house of worship" and go elsewhere. If I were you I'd be happy that your unnecessary and likely equally hideous expansion got approved, and shut your raggy mouths about planting a few trees to reduce the eyesore your neighbor will have to endure.

4/29/2009 12:35:42 PM

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BwtrMom wrote:

They also did not include in this article whether or not the additional housing for up to 10 priests and their families was approved. If it was I have big issues with that (along with the what GreenKnoller brought up)

10 priests and their families, at 2 children/family would be 20 children (could be more). That would mean that those children would be able to attend the Bridgewater-Raritan Schools tax free!!! I just approved a needed budget increase so to maintain the education of the children of this community, but not to subsidize kids whose families will not be contributing to the tax base!!!

Smells fishy to me too (where there is smoke, there is usually fire)

4/29/2009 10:55:24 AM

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