



January 25, 2021

Mr. Scott Meyer, Planner III  
Prince William County Planning Office  
5 County Complex Court, Suite 210  
Prince William, Virginia 22192

RE: Response to Applicant's Letter dated January 12, 2021

Dear Mr. Meyer:

LOCCA's/PELT Committee received a copy of the applicant's response to our letter of November 17, 2020. This response represents our fourth letter on the proposed expansion plans by the Applicant over a two year span. The community remains genuinely concerned about the size and scope of this expansion project. Let us be abundantly clear on the points the community has raised. This is not about the mosque; this is front and center clearly about the safety of the community. Rest assured that we would be offering the same rationale if this were a commercial property proposing the same resulting impacts. At the Planning Commission meeting, many voices attempted to make this a community vs. mosque issue. That is a profoundly wrong and unacceptable position to be held by either side of the argument. LOCCA and its' PELT Committee have worked with many religious institutions over the past 5 decades-and even objected to several requests for the same reason – the expansion was too big to be done in one “bite.” Rather, we worked with the church to phase the expansion. Even small churches have had to phase their expansions for many reasons, funding being a big issue.

Clearly, our biggest concern remains traffic safety. **The traffic signal at Queen Chapel Road must be installed even for present day traffic concerns to be mitigated.** We understand the signal has been warranted but installation is being held up due to funding constraints. This is entirely unacceptable. The amount of funding necessary to install the signal is a mere pittance compared to the risk averted, property damage and injuries mitigated, as well as lives saved. We are not concerned about the split in funding, but all parties must produce their respective portions immediately for this project to even be considered for moving forward.

Following paragraphs delineate our follow-on comments and recommendations:

### **1. Traffic Signal.**

“The Applicant's proposed expansion does not trigger the need for a traffic signal...” This is misleading and dangerous! There is already a need. Common sense demonstrates that an increase of 4,489 or 355% would naturally increase the traffic volume at a very congested location. The light is needed for safety (limiting the dramatic increase of U-turns on an arterial road of 50 mph from a low visibility location) and to assist with traffic flow by not having hundreds of cars cutting in front of other cars in order to make U-turns.



“The County or VDOT could install the signal today, but has opted not to do so.” This is misleading. This is due to VDOT budgetary delays and not about need or that they have “opted not to do so.” The installation of the traffic signal at the Hoadly and Queen Chapel intersection immediately changes the safety dynamic for all parties and should be the highest priority for public safety.

The 3.32% trip generation in “peak hour” trips at that intersection is misleading. There is a much greater increase in traffic – from 1,761 to 6,250 on Fridays according to estimates submitted by the mosque. The 3.32% estimate was taken on a less busy day – Thursday.

The applicant prepared a Traffic and Parking Management Plan (TPMP) that does not have viable traffic management methods. It mainly addresses parking, not eliminating the U-turn movements which is a major safety concern of the community. It suggests using the same failing method of police traffic management on Fridays. It does not address traffic on Saturdays through Thursdays to include vehicles for the school or day care in the mornings, afternoons, and rush hour. There is also the concern for special events held at the mosque in the event center.

## **2. Reverse Entrance/Exit Directional Flow.**

A thorough analysis has not been conducted to determine the best flow. Instead, the mosque has promoted their preference in disagreement with previous VDOT recommendations. They have met with various participants and convinced them into agreeing with their preference. The neighborhood is the one who is on site and has to deal with the problem of exiting their homes every day, and many of the residents have been in their homes for nearly 4 decades.

A solution must be found that would not harm any concerned parties, but would focus on providing greater safety for the applicant, the applicant’s parishioners, their school children and visitors, the neighborhood residents, and the thousands of vehicles traveling on Hoadly Road. Some suggested options:

- VDOT install traffic signal at Queen Chapel.
- Mosque install traffic signal at Queen Chapel and be reimbursed once VDOT funding is available.
- Prohibit U-turns at Lost Creek UNLESS PWC Police are directing traffic. It has a curve in the road limiting visibility for those to see down the road with enough time to make a safe U-turn as well as for oncoming vehicles who would not see the U-turning vehicles with enough time to stop safely. It is abundantly clear from the traffic accident data at the existing facility without the proposed expansion that accidents have already been caused because of this issue, and that this intersection area around the mosque has much higher accidents than other intersection areas along the Hoadly Road transportation corridor.



### **3. Phasing Project.**

It is quite common for religious institutions to phase projects. Most are cooperative and willing to phase on their own, not requiring the County to place that demand upon it. One example of phasing is the ADAMS Mosque where the County required them to apply for an amendment to expand further. Some religious institutions have been denied some uses so would have to apply later to add them. If the mosque prefers, rather than phasing, portions could be denied.

### **4. Install a “No U-Turn” sign at the intersection of Hoadly Road and Lost Creek Court for westbound traffic.**

Prohibiting U-turns for westbound traffic is not problematic.

- Westbound vehicles do not make U-turns at Lost Creek. The mosque attendees are the only ones doing so.
- A traffic analysis would most likely demonstrate that making a left at Queen Chapel is safer than making a U-turn at Lost Creek. There is a curve in Hoadly Road that contributes to this issue. The visibility to make the U-turn at Lost Creek is 516 feet due to the curve, whereas the visibility to make a left at Queen Chapel is 1,700 feet. On a road with the speed limit of 50 mph, it is clear that having more than twice the visibility would be safer for all on the road. If the mosque attendees still want to turn right out of the property and make U-turns, a suggestion would be to permit it ONLY when PWC Police are directing traffic. That requirement might satisfy the Police officers' ability to control the traffic in a more condensed area. At the same time, that allows the neighborhood at Lost Creek to exit/enter at the only entrance/exit of their neighborhood.

### **5. Establish MOU or some formal agreement between the parties to guarantee that necessary parking spaces for off-site overflow parking will exist when required.**

The numbers demonstrate that parking will be a greater issue than it currently is. The ratio will worsen from 1.52 prayer rugs per parking space to 2.28 prayer rugs per parking space. It is understood that the County requirement is for one parking space per 3 seats. Therefore, it cannot be a requirement to have more parking spaces. However, during holidays and Ramadan, the number of vehicles has been demonstrated to be much greater. Therefore it is recommended that an MOU be established. The holiday and Ramadan calendar are known so the MOU can be planned according to the calendar.

### **6. Develop an option to provide for structured parking on a portion of the site.**

As mentioned above, we are convinced that with the proposed expansion the parking ratio will worsen compared to the current ratio. Since parking has already been noted to be an issue, building structured parking is a suggested solution. If the cost of structured parking is an issue, one consideration is to reduce the expansion to a size for which the current surface parking lot can better accommodate the projected need. If maintaining the same ratio as today, the number of parking spaces needed would be 1,188. Therefore, a corresponding reduction would help remedy the issue.



**7. Plan for more recreational space for students at all grade levels, and Coordinate with the PWC schools for recommendations on sizing adequate indoor and outdoor recreational space, as well as teaching space metrics for classrooms and staff accommodations.**

We recommend that the Prince William County school staff be consulted for guidelines on providing a safe, creative and beneficial environment for the future expanded classes for all grades. This undoubtedly is in the best interest of these future school children.

**8. Plan for additional on-site SWM capacity.**

The recommendations we made for the expanded facility on SWM are for the site to be able to better handle those more frequent and intense rainfall events we are experiencing, and which will be worse over time. It is in the Applicant's best interest to be prudent and plan for the future, and in so doing, will also be a considerate neighbor to the residents in the immediately adjacent properties.

**9. Establish a SUP condition for a courtesy review prior to approval of the final site plan (and each phase) with LOCCA/PELT and the surrounding community on architecture, landscaping, lighting, traffic flow, and overall site plan issues.**

We appreciate retention of this Courtesy Review provision, as it will allow everyone to engage and discuss details prior to final site plan approval in an informal setting. The Applicant might be able to incorporate those suggestions from the community if they sound reasonable to the Applicant.

**10. Look for the opportunity to purchase additional acreage adjacent to the existing property.**

We were looking out for a more successful future for the mosque and its' success as a regional center for decades hence by raising the issue of purchasing additional acreage. If they decide not to pursue this suggestion, it is totally their decision. We were looking for a way for the Applicant to forego the need for having an MOU for overflow offsite parking, or for carpooling, busses, or other arrangements, including the expense of structured parking, to mitigate overflow parking impacts on their site, while also providing the future school children spaces for recreational activities.

We still strongly urge the Applicant to consider the above suggestions so that they might adequately and successfully accommodate their vision for this site, and to be a good neighbor. We remain at a complete loss to understand how the Applicant does not see that the sheer scale of their proposal will negatively impact the current and already dangerous traffic conditions that have been clearly documented without any expansion to the mosque. The purpose of SUPs is to mitigate adverse impacts, and this exercise of voicing our concerns especially on safety concerns such as traffic safety is in line with that goal. The Prince William County Police Department, the Prince William County DOT and the Virginia DOT have clearly documented the existing traffic safety issues at and near the current mosque site. These existing accident statistics on the current site send a very clear message that there is a need to conduct serious proactive mitigation



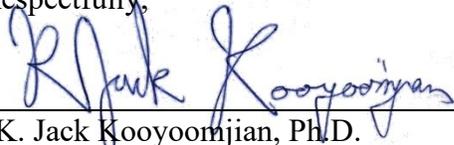
planning and phasing requirements. As we view this, it would make a lot of sense to split the project into stages or phases and condition the approval of each step on the success of earlier ones.

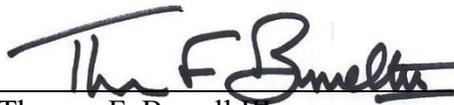
While the County staff cannot ask the applicant to purchase additional real estate to be a good neighbor and make their vision more palatable to the community, we as a civic association and as private citizens see this as a very real possibility to make the proposal more workable, and to allow for their success for decades ahead as a part of the community in which they contribute to the social, religious and cultural fabric of the community.

Due to the scheduled Town Hall by Coles Supervisor Yesli Vega on January 26<sup>th</sup> to discuss the mosque expansion proposal, and the BOCS public hearing of February 2, 2021, I am signing this letter representing LOCCA, rather than circulate our letter for our usual multiple signature format. Rest assured that this letter has undergone vetting within the community.

We always welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss these items so we might reach a common understanding and consensus. We wish the applicant much success, and stand ready and available for dialogue to help them be successful.

Respectfully,

  
K. Jack Kooyoomjian, Ph.D.  
President, LOCCA

  
Thomas F. Burrell III  
Chairman, LOCCA/PELT Committee

cc: Board of County Supervisors (BOCS)  
Mr. Parag Agrawal, Director of Planning  
Ms. Rebecca Horner, Deputy County Executive  
Mr. Ricardo Canizales, Director of Transportation  
Ms. Elizabeth Scullen, Chief, Transportation Planning & Programming Division  
Mr. Richard Weinmann, Traffic Safety Engineer  
Mr. George Phillips, Traffic Safety Engineer  
Ms. Julia Cottrell, Chief of Staff, Occoquan District  
Mr. Fred Cooper, Chief of Staff, Coles District  
Ms. Kelley Easterly, Chief of Staff, Neabsco District  
Ms. Jonelle Cameron, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, P.C.  
Mr. Brian Prater, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, P.C.  
Mr. Martin Jeter, President, Mid-County Civic Association