

JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR. County Executive

MAUREEN E. MURPHY
Chief Administrative Law Judge
ANDREW M. BELT
Administrative Law Judge
DEREK J. BAUMGARDNER
Administrative Law Judge

July 29, 2024

Dino La Fiandra, Esquire – <u>dcl@lafiandralaw.com</u>
The Law Office of Dino C. La Fiandra, LLC
100 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 305
Towson, MD 21204

RE: Petitions for Special Hearing, Special Exception & Variance

Case No. 2024-0112-SPHXA Property: 14 Aigburth Road

Dear Mr. La Fiandra:

Enclosed please find a copy of the decision rendered in the above-captioned matter.

Pursuant to Baltimore County Code § 32-3-401(a), "a person aggrieved or feeling aggrieved" by this Decision and Order may file an appeal to the County Board of Appeals within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. For further information on filing an appeal, please contact the Office of Administrative Hearings at 410-887-3868.

Sincerely,

Mauren E. Murphy

MAUREEN E. MURPHY Chief Administrative Law Judge for Baltimore County

MEM:dlm Enclosure

c: Menachem Rivkin, Director – <u>mendyriv@gmail.com</u>
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IN RE: PETITIONS FOR SPECIAL HEARING, *

SPECIAL EXCEPTION &

VARIANCE

(14 Aigburth Road)

9th Election District

6th Council District

Friends of Lubavitch, Inc.

Legal Owner

*

BEFORE THE OFFICE

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OF ADMINISTRATIVE

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HEARINGS

FOR BALTIMORE COUNTY

Petitioner Case No. 2024-0112-SPHXA

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OPINION AND ORDER

This matter comes before the Office of Administrative Hearings ("OAH") for consideration of Petitions for Special Hearing, Special Exception and Variance filed on behalf of Friends of Lubavitch, Inc., legal owner ("Lubavitch") by Menachem Rivkin, Director of Friends of Lubavitch, Inc. ("Rivkin"), for the property at 14 Aigburth Road, Towson ("the Property").

A Petition for Special Hearing was filed as follows:

- 1. To approve a Jewish Student Center/Jewish Learning Center in the style of a "Chabad House" with accessory parsonage use for resident Rabbi and family, as a use permitted by right under Baltimore County Zoning Regulations ("BCZR"), §1B01.1.A.3 (Churches, other buildings for religious worship or other religious institutions).
- 2. To approve the site plan for the proposed use in accordance with BCZR, §1B01.1.B.1.g(6) and/or §1B01.1.B.1.g(10), including a finding that the restrictions of BCZR, §1B01.1.B.1.e(1) through (5) do not apply.
- 3. To approve a modified parking plan pursuant to BCZR, §409.12.B, to allow 2 parking spaces to serve the proposed use in lieu of 23 spaces required, or in lieu of such other number of parking spaces as may be required for the proposed use under BCZR, §409.6.

In the alternative to Petition for Special Hearing Request No. 1, Petitioner also filed a Petition for Special Exception, for a Jewish Student Center/Jewish Learning Center in the style of

a "Chabad House" with accessory parsonage use for resident Rabbi and family, pursuant to BCZR, §1B01.1.C.4 (civic, social, recreational or educational uses).

Petitioner also requested Variance relief from BCZR: (1) §1B01.2.C.1.a, for existing interior side yard setbacks in one instance of 8 ft., and in one instance of 13 ft., in lieu of 20 ft. required. No new building is proposed; and (2) §301.1, for an existing carport with a side yard setback of 7 ft. in lieu of 15 ft. required. No new building is proposed.

A public WebEx hearing was conducted virtually in lieu of an in-person hearing on June 25, 2024. The Petition was properly advertised and posted. Rivkin appeared in support of the Petition along with J. Scott Dallas, Maryland registered property line surveyor, who prepared and sealed a site plan (the "2024 Site Plan"). (Pet. Ex. 2). Dino C. La Fiandra, Esquire represented the Petitioner. Jason Vettori, Esquire of Schmidt, Gildea and Smith, who resides at 5 Maryland Avenue, testified in opposition.

Zoning Advisory Committee ("ZAC") comments were received from the Department of Planning ("DOP") and Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability ("DEPS"). Development Plans Review ("DPR")/Department of Public Works and Transportation ("DPWT") also submitted a ZAC comment opposing the Petition for Variance relief and the Petition for Special Hearing for a modified parking plan as follows:

A) The site provides parking via curb cut onto the grassy area on the property. The on-street frontage has parking restrictions. The other side of the street across the site frontage has timed parking restrictions. In consideration to the required parking quota and the available parking in the vicinity, DPWT is not in favor for granting a variance or waiver for on-site parking reductions.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The factual background regarding the use of this Property under the Lubavitch's legal ownership and Rivkin's residency does not begin with the filing of the Petitions in the above-captioned Case. The relevant facts relating to the use of this Property were already found, and the legal issues adjudicated, in prior Cases by OAH, the Board of Appeals, Circuit Court for Baltimore County and the Court of Special Appeals. During the ownership/occupation by Lubavitch/Rivkin, this Property has an extensive and contentious history involving the County and the neighboring property owners. In this Petition, there are no new uses proposed for the Property; all residential and religious uses are the same as dating back to 2008 when Lubavitch purchased the home for the use as a Chabad House, and for use as a home in which Rivkin, its Director, would reside. The facts and decisions in those prior Cases as maintained in My Neighborhood, are summarized below, and those Orders and Opinions are incorporated herein in their entirety. (See My Neighborhood Files).

1) Case No.: 2015-0223-SPH.

In 2015, Lubavitch/Rivkin filed a Petition for Special Hearing to confirm the *continued* used of Property as a parsonage with an accessory use for religious worship and religious education which use began in 2008. As in this Case, Scott Dallas was the surveyor who filed that Petition and prepared and sealed a site plan (the "2015 Site Plan"). The 2015 Site Plan read that Lubavitch/Rivkin sought to build a 2-story, 2,604 sf addition onto the original 1,420 sf, 1½ story home for not only the residential use, but to accommodate the ongoing Chabad House religious uses and programs. The 2015 Site Plan indicates that the original 1952 home was 25 ft. in height. Architectural plans for the addition entitled 'Chabad House Addition' were also submitted into evidence. The evidence was undisputed that a directory sign which read "Chabad 14 Aighurth"

(Case No.: 2015-0223-SPH, Prot. Ex. 17) had been posted on the Property since 2008. In its 2015 ZAC comment, DOP opposed the requested relief finding that Lubavitch/Rivkin was operating a Community Building requiring a Special Exception as well as compliance with the Residential Transition Area ("RTA") requirements. Neighboring property owners objected to the Petition.

In the Opinion and Order (the "2015 Order"), OAH (Beverungen, J.) made findings of fact that Lubavitch/Rivkin sought to enlarge the home for both residential and religious uses. Those religious uses included programs and activities of weekly meetings with college students regarding Jewish issues, and weekly hosting of Shabbat dinners on Friday evenings, at which dinners 50+ people regularly attend. In that Case, Rivkin testified that the Property was not used as a synagogue or as a community building. (2015 Opinion, p.2). He explained that he was a member of a synagogue on Pimlico Rd. and that he walked over 6 miles on Saturday mornings to attend services.

ALJ Beverungen denied Lubavitch/Rivkin's request for confirmation of a parsonage and confirmation of the existing religious worship and religious education use, finding that the single family home does not qualify as a "parsonage" because a 'parsonage' is an accessory structure near or on the same grounds as a synagogue. From the evidence submitted by Lubavitch/Rivkin in 2015, ALJ Beverungen noted that the State of Maryland had exempted Lubavitch from paying real property taxes under MD Code Ann., TP, §7-204 which permits an exemption to a religious organization if a property is actually used exclusively for:

- (1) public religious worship;
- (2) a parsonage or convent; or
- (3) educational purposes.

In denying the Petition for Special Hearing, ALJ Beverungen, citing the holding by the Appellate Court of Maryland in *East Coast Conference of Evangelical Covenant Church of America, Inc. v. Prince George's County*, 40 Md. App. 213 (1978), wrote:

While the property is owned by a religious organization, and Rabbi Rivkin is clergy, there is missing from the equation a congregation or parish to which the parsonage would be adjunct. It is simply not sufficient that the home be owned by a religious organization and lived in by a clergy member and his family.

After the 2015 Order was issued, Lubavitch/Rivkin, by way of letter dated July 24, 2015, filed a Motion for Reconsideration seeking a finding that the Property was: "being used as a residence, and <u>not</u> as a religious institution or community building." The Motion written by Counsel for Lubavitch/Rivkin repeated that the use of the Property was <u>for residential purposes only</u> and <u>not</u> as a Religious House of Worship or as a Community Building. In denying the Motion, ALJ Beverungen acknowledged the purpose behind filing the Motion was not only to dispose of the pending Code Enforcement Citation (CC1500406) issued for unapproved use of the Property as a House of Worship and/or Community Building, but to have the building permit for the addition released. Lubavitch/Rivkin did not appeal the 2015 Case.

2) Case No.: 2016-0170-SPH.

(a) OAH Opinion and Order.

In 2016, Lubavitch/Rivkin filed another Petition for Special Hearing asking for the same relief they sought in 2015 Motion for Reconsideration. Scott Dallas was again the expert surveyor who prepared a site plan and testified (the "2016 Site Plan"). The 2016 Site Plan was identical to the 2015 Site Plan, except the reason for the Special Hearing noted on that Plan had changed from a combined institutional/residential use to only a residential use. Notably, the same Architectural

Plans for the addition were submitted in both the 2015 and 2016 Cases except that, in 2016, the word "Chabad" had been removed from the title block on the Architectural Plans.

In the 2016-0170-SPH Petition, Lubavitch/Rivkin sought an Order that the same 2,604 sf addition be approved for residential purposes only of the Rivkin family. There was no Variance or other zoning relief needed or filed, and as such, it met all bulk regulations as a residential addition. Neighboring property owners testified in opposition asserting that the Property was still being used for same Chabad religious activities which were denied in the 2015 Order. In making findings of fact, ALJ Beverungen ruled that the Property could <u>not</u> be used as a synagogue or community building:

Petitioner cannot use the property as a church, synagogue or community building; that much is clear from the prior order and the BCZR.

(the "2016-0170-SPH Order"). As in 2015, the DOP, in its 2016 ZAC comment, opposed the relief, noting that there was no need to file the 2016 Petition solely seeking approval to build a residential addition, onto a dwelling, in a DR 5.5 zone:

The Department is not clear as to why a permitted residential addition to an existing dwelling to be used for living space and needing no variance relief would require such approvals. That fact notwithstanding, the Department does not support granting the petitioned zoning approval.

In recognizing that the 2016 Case was the same as the 2015 Case, DOP then emphasized that no interior floor plans had been provided to illustrate how the proposed size of the addition would function as a residence, particularly in light of the 2015 OAH Order prohibiting the Chabad building. The DOP ZAC comment indicates that, upon inspection by DOP planner in 2016, the "Chabad 14 Aigburth" sign was still posted on the Property. DOP's research further revealed that

advertisements confirmed that the Property was operating as a: 'Chabad Jewish Center at Towson and Goucher and that Shabbat Dinner and Lunch is hosted on site." As in 2015, DOP opposed the requested relief stating that "any use of the property for civic, social or commercial purposes would be contrary to said community plan and the Master Plan 2020."

In the 2016-0170-SPH Order, ALJ Beverungen approved the addition as a *residential* structure only as follows:

....to approve the construction of a structural addition to an existing single family residential dwelling to be used as additional living space for the family who reside[s] therein, be and is hereby GRANTED.

(Emphasis Added). Lubavitch/Rivkin did not appeal the 2016 Case

(b) Board of Appeals.

The neighboring property owners filed an appeal of the 2016-0170-SPH Order. After the appeal was filed with the Board of Appeals, Lubavitch/Rivkin then filed a Request to Withdraw Petition for Special Hearing, the effect of which was to dismiss the appeal. By Order dated January 17, 2017, the Board of Appeals dismissed the Case with prejudice.

3) Case No.: 2016-308-SPH.

(a) OAH Opinion and Order.

On June 3, 2016, neighboring property owners filed their own Petition for Special Hearing seeking an Order to determine: (1) the use of the Property; and (2) whether the current use constituted a violation or noncompliance with the BCZR for failure to obtain a change of occupancy permit to change the "use" of the residential dwelling to a church, other building for religious worship, other religious institution or some other use as provided in BCZR, and Baltimore County Building Code ("BCBC") as well as the failure to obtain required Variance

relief. On July 25, 2016, ALJ Beverungen dismissed Case No.: 16-308-SPH with prejudice holding that the Petitioners' cause could only be resolved in a Code Enforcement case.

(b) Board of Appeals Opinion.

In its Opinion, the Board of Appeals details the relevant facts pertaining to the Lubavitch/Rivkin ownership and occupancy. At the *de novo* hearing before the Board, both Rivkin and Scott Dallas testified. The Board's Opinion explains that, after only part of Rivkin's testimony had been completed on first day of the hearing, Rivkin, although subpoenaed to testify, failed to appear for the subsequent day of testimony. The Board concluded as follows:

The majority found that the totality of all the evidence demonstrated that Lubavitch had acted in bad faith, that there was little question, based on the record, that even before the new building, Lubavitch had been acting as a community center at 14 Aigburth; that the only genuine primary purpose of the new structure was to enhance the Lubavitch community center presence and activities; and that the claim that this was simply an addition to a residence was not credible.

The Board's factual analysis spells out that as of October 27, 2016, the new building was also largely complete; by the January 12, 2017 hearing, it was essentially complete. At the Board hearing, Scott Dallas provided a chronology of events along with some additional facts not previously noted in the OAH Opinions and Orders. Mr. Dallas explained that Lubavitch had applied for a building permit to construct a "parsonage" but that permit was denied because a Special Exception was needed and the RTA requirements had to be met. In its Opinion, the Board describes Mr. Dallas' testimony wherein he explained that Lubavitch then applied for a second building permit which permit then characterized the same addition as 'residential.' Mr. Dallas made clear that footprint for the second building permit was exactly the same as the footprint for the parsonage.

The Board found that there was no difference between the site plans and that the total size of the new building undermined any claim that it is merely a residence for the Rivkin family. The Board found that the new building was simply attached to the original home by a covered breezeway, without any effort to integrate it into the pre-existing home. Based on the evidence presented, the Board also made the following relevant findings of fact:

- (1) the addition has an institutional design, not residential;
- (2) the addition looks like a community center and was always intended to be used as one;
- (3) the addition is 7 ft. +/- taller than the neighboring home;
- (4) the first floor home can seat over 120 people;
- (5) there is a cloak room rather than a closet;
- (6) there are separate men and women's powder rooms;
- (7) there is a commercial kitchen;
- (8) the addition will have a library, conference room, synagogue and student lounge;
- (9) there are two (2) apartments on the second floor with outside entrances;
- (10) a sign for "Chabad 14 Aigburth" has been posted on the sidewalk in front of the Property since Lubavitch/Rivkin purchase/occupancy in 2008;
- (11) there was evidence of Lubavitch sponsored activities at the Property both before and after the addition was constructed;
- (12) the weekly Shabbat dinners and other Jewish celebrations involved invitations to hundreds of people;
- (13) the Chabad House has been and will continue to be associated with Towson University campus activities;
- (14) the expansion of the original home has naturally expanded the nature, timing and amount of Chabad activities;
- (15) Aigburth Rd. has limited residential permit parking which was taken by visitors of the Chabad House; and
- (16) tax documents submitted into evidence identified the Property as a "student center".

The Board concluded that Lubavitch acted in bad faith in obtaining the building permit and in constructing the new building. (Board Opinion, p. 16).

4) Friends of Lubavitch v. Robin Zoll, Case No.: 03-C-16-008420.

On October 23, 2018, the Appellate Court of Maryland issued an Opinion affirming the Circuit Court for Baltimore County in a case filed by neighboring property owner Robin Zoll (16 Aigburth) that the Lubavitch/Rivkin's proposed new building would violate a restrictive covenant running with the land prohibiting dwellings to be constructed within a certain distance of Aigburth Rd. (The Appellate Opinion can also be found in My Neighborhood). With the new building complete, on April 13, 2017, the Circuit Court determined that it violated the restrictive covenant and ordered that Lubavitch remove it no later than March 1, 2018.

According to the facts found by the Circuit Court, as set forth in the Appellate Opinion, not long after Lubavitch/Rivkin broke ground on the new building, Mrs. Zoll informed Lubavitch/Rivkin that the building would violate the restrictive covenant. Notwithstanding the notice, Lubavitch/Rivkin continued with construction, and as a result, Mrs. Zoll and the community association filed a Complaint for Declaratory Judgment, for Injunctive relief and for attorneys' fees in the Circuit Court. The Appellate Court noted that by the time of the Circuit Court trial (7 months after filing), the building was complete.

The Appellate Court's Opinion details the record evidence in the Circuit Court trial. Part of that evidence was that Rivkin's residency at the Property was a form of compensation for his work as Director running the day-to-day operations of Chabad-Lubavitch Towson from an office at Towson University. In January, 2012, Lubavitch/Rivkin informed the community association that they intended to build an addition onto the existing home to "accommodate worship services for TU students." Rivkin testified that the original plan was to build a synagogue but that there was opposition from the neighborhood. In 2014, Lubavitch/Rivkin held a groundbreaking

ceremony to announce plans "to build an additional space to....help enhance.....religious Jewish life in Towson" at the Property.

The Appellate Court noted that, due to Lubavitch/Rivkins' campaign to continue with construction plans, a Code Enforcement Citation (CC1500406) was issued on March 25, 2015 to:

Cease the illegal House of Worship/Religious Institution without the benefit of meeting the RTA requirements, the parking requirements and the Non Residential Princip[al] Setback requirements and to cease the illegal operation of a Community Building without the benefit of a Special Exception hearing.

The Appellate Court wrote that Lubavitch responded to the Code Enforcement Citation by filing Case No.: 2015-0223-SPH, only to be followed 6 months later by Case No.: 2016-0170-SPH. The Appellate Court mentioned that if Lubavitch proceeded with construction, it knew it was doing so at its own risk. The Appellate Court goes on to acknowledge that, despite the pending appeal in Case No.: 2016-0170-SPH, Lubavitch applied for a building permit on April 19, 2016 to attach a new 6,614 sf building to the front of the existing 2,200 sf home, quadrupling its original size. As to the restrictive covenant, the building permit indicated that it would extend out between 56 to 57 ft. from Aigburth Rd. in violation of the 112.5 ft to 115 ft setback. The evidence in the Circuit Court was that the new building would be 3-stories tall, have 4 bedrooms, 7 bathrooms, 5 wetbars, a mikvah, and 2 kitchens. The Chabad building would be able to accommodate over 200 invited guests on high holidays, with 50+ people attending for weekly Shabbat dinner. Construction began on June 6, 2016.

The Circuit Court trial was held on March 30 and 31, 2017. Scott Dallas again testified for Lubavitch. Rivkin testified that although construction was substantially behind schedule at one point, rather than stop work due to the pending Case, Lubavitch/Rivkin deliberately proceeded with construction due to its perceived financial concerns over the building contract.

On April 13, 2017, the Circuit Court issued a Memorandum Opinion and Order wherein the trial judge found Rivkin to be "evasive and aggressive during questioning." The trial judge also found that Lubavitch had actual notice of the restrictive covenant in 2008 when the Property was purchased, and that Rivkin admitted that Lubavitch chose to aggressively proceed with construction anyway. The trial court found that the new building was in violation of the setback covenant. The trial judge also observed that Lubavitch made "no innocent mistakes" and caused harm to the plaintiffs. The Circuit Court found Lubavitch to be a "willful violator" of the setback covenant. The Circuit Court ordered that the Chabad building and all other improvements which were in violation of the setback covenant be removed no later than March 1, 2018. The Appellate Court of Maryland found no abuse of discretion and affirmed the Circuit Court's holding in its entirety.

The Circuit Court docket entries (also found in My Neighborhood) sheds even more light on the relevant factual chronology after the Circuit Court Opinion was issued. Lubavitch/Rivkin appealed the Circuit Court Opinion. On April 25, 2018, their Motion to Stay Enforcement of a Judgment was denied. On June 13, 2018, Lubavitch posted a bond in the amount of \$25,000.00. On July 5, 2018, after a hearing, the Circuit Court ordered the Court-appointed Receiver (Deborah Dopkin, Esquire) to formulate a plan of compliance regarding the removal of the building which violated the setback covenant. By September 10, 2018, a contractor had been approved to handle the demolition.

By Order of the Circuit Court dated November 2, 2018, Receiver Dopkin was authorized to engage the contractor to raze the addition within 45 days of receipt of estimate to do so. The docket entries repeat the Circuit Court Order that Lubavitch/Rivkin's continuation of a commercial use had previously been found to be non-compliant with restrictions on the Property:

11/02/2018 DOPC - Memorandum Opinion of the Court that the Receiver's Motion for Approval is granted in part. The court will authorize the Receiver to engage the services of Handy to raze the addition, with construction management overseen by Mr. Adashek. The court declines to authorize moving the existing structure to replace the original home on the lot, as that would authorize the continuation of a commercial use that has been found to be noncompliant with restrictions on the property.

11/02/2018 DORD - Order of court that the Receiver's Request for Approval of Construction Management and Contractor Designation (#65000) is GRANTED IN PART AND DENIED IN PART; the Court appointed Receiver, Deborah C Dopkin is authorized to enter into a contract for service with Handy Contract Services LLC to raze the Structure at 14 Aigburth Road; Receiver is authorized to engage the services of Scott M Adashek as necessary to manage and oversee the execution of the contract; Defendant Friends of Lubavitch shall deposit in the Receiver's Trust account the revised estimate for the cost of services by Handy Contract Services LLC to raze the home within 45 days of receipt of the final estimate, together with \$20,000 as a retainer for the services to be billed by Scott M Adashek Filed: 11/02/2018 Decision: Ruled - 11/02/2018 F

Filed: 11/02/2018 Decision: Ruled - 11/02/2018

On September 30, 2021, a demolition schedule, a demolition budget, and construction management contract were filed in the Circuit Court. A subsequent Circuit Court Order dated March 9, 2022, granted a Motion to Enforce Liability of Surety such that United States Fire Insurance Co. was ordered to pay the amount of \$114,491.00 to the trust account of Court-appointed Receiver Dopkin, no later than ten (10) business days from the date of entry of the Order. By June 13, 2022, the Receivership was terminated, and the Case was dismissed.

5) This Case.

The Petitions for Zoning relief here were filed on April 24, 2024. At the hearing, Petitioner's only witness was Scott Dallas who was accepted as an expert surveyor. (Pet. Ex. 1). As with his 2015 Site Plan and 2016 Site Plan, Mr. Dallas prepared the 2024 Site Plan which mirrors the earlier footprint of the original and new building. (Pet. Ex. 2). However, the 2024 Site

Plan now reads that the completed building is 3-stories tall, and is 35 ft in height. Street view photographs presented confirm that the institutional looking building as originally planned for by Lubavitch/Rivkin in 2012, has been built. (Pet. Exs. 4-7).

VARIANCE

A Variance request involves a two-step process, summarized as follows:

- (1) It must be shown the property of is unique in a manner which makes it unlike surrounding properties, and that uniqueness or peculiarity must necessitate variance relief; and
- (2) If variance relief is denied, Petitioner will experience a practical difficulty or hardship.

Cromwell v. Ward, 102 Md. App. 691 (1995).

There was no evidence presented that the Property was unique under *Cromwell*, *supra*. In fact, the street view photographs of 12 and 14 Aigburth show that both properties have the same sloping topography. Mr. Dallas testified that, as shown on the street view photographs, the original homes on 12, 14 and 16 Aigburth were of similar size and scale, each having multiple stories. Accordingly, Lubavitch/Rivkin failed to prove uniqueness and for this reason, the Variance relief will be denied.

Even if uniqueness under *Cromwell* could be found, there is no practical difficulty or unreasonable hardship under the previously adjudicated facts. Indeed, this is a classic case of self-imposed hardship. This is <u>not</u> a case where the use was residential, and now the use is proposed to be changed to religious/residential. As the relevant facts above unequivocally demonstrate, there has been no change in circumstances to justify filing for the zoning relief here. The law is clear that self-inflicted hardship cannot form the basis for a claim of practical difficulty. Speaking for the Court in *Cromwell*, *supra*, Judge Cathell noted:

Were we to hold that self-inflicted hardships in and of themselves justified variances, we would, effectively, not only generate a plethora of such hardships but we would also emasculate zoning ordinances. Zoning would become meaningless. We hold that practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship for zoning variance purposes cannot generally be self-inflicted.

Cromwell at 722. To this point, the Supreme Court of Maryland in Richard Roeser Prof'l Builder, Inc. v. Anne Arundel County, 368 Md. 294, 793 A.2d 545 (2002), explained that self-imposed hardships are those which are created by the owners of the property. In Ad + Soil, Inc. v. County Comm'rs of Queen Anne's County, 307 Md. 307, 316, 340, 513 A.2d 893 (1986) the Supreme Court of Maryland found that construction which violated setbacks was self-inflicted condition creating need for requested variance request.

The holding in *Chesley v. Annapolis*, 933 A.2d 475, 491- 492, 176 Md. App. 413 (Md. App. 2007) is also noteworthy:

Ultimately, the Chesleys' contention that the Board erred in finding that they could have avoided the need for a setback variance by designing their home differently rests on the flawed premise that they cannot be held accountable for choosing to build a 5,000 sq. ft. residence before obtaining the variance necessary to build the garage.

* * * *

Moreover, in contrast to *Stansbury*, there is substantial evidence in this record to support the Board's determination that the Chesleys' predicament did not result from mere compliance with applicable zoning and development laws, but from the Chesley's own actions in developing the property.

The record supports the Board's finding that the Chesleys created the need for the variance by developing the property before obtaining the garage variance. When they built their house and pool, the Chesleys eliminated the possibility of locating a garage where no variance would be required. Among the options the Chesleys chose not to pursue was designing a smaller house that would permit a detached garage on the side of the property, opposite the viewshed that City planners were seeking to protect, in a location that would not require a setback variance. Alternatively, the Chesleys could

have waited for a ruling on their garage variance application before proceeding with construction of the larger house and pool. Instead of getting the Board's answer first, so that they could reconsider their development plans if the Board denied a front yard setback, the Chesleys proceeded to build the house and pool at the risk of what happened here — that the Board would not approve a front yard variance for the garage, notwithstanding support by the Planning Department for the Chesleys' applications. In these circumstances, we find no legal or factual error in the Board's conclusion that the Chesleys' claimed hardship was self-created.

Applying the holdings in *Cromwell*, *Ad Soil* and *Chelsey* here, and as described by the Circuit Court in *Friends of Lubavitch v. Robin Zoll*, there have been no innocent mistakes by Lubavitch/Rifkin in constructing what is essentially a second building in front of the original home (albeit connected by a breezeway), which building has created the need for the Variance relief. As the Circuit Court previously found, Lubavitch/Rivkin intentionally and aggressively pursued construction, claiming economic concerns over the building contract. However, economic loss alone does not necessarily satisfy the "practical difficulties" test, because, as the Appellate Court of Maryland has previously observed: "[e]very person requesting a variance can indicate some economic loss." *Cromwell* at 715, 651 A.2d 424 (quoting *Xanthos v. Bd. of Adjustment*, 685 P.2d 1032, 1036-37 (Utah 1984)). Indeed, the *Cromwell* Court held that to grant an application for a Variance any time economic loss is asserted, "would make a mockery of the zoning program."

To be clear, the setback Variance now being sought here under BCZR, §1B01.2.C.1 is entirely due to the use of the building as a non-residential principal building. As the above Cases demonstrate, Lubavitch/Rivkin deceitfully changed their narratives about the actual use of the Property, and changed their Site Plans, to suit whatever litigation was pending, with the ultimate goal of obtaining the building permit for the Chabad building, only to file for the instant relief after their mission was accomplished. The 2024 Site Plan is the same as 2015 and 2016 Site Plans;

there have been no change in circumstances, no change in use, no change in zoning, and the same BCZR and BCC regulations have always been applicable to the use of this Property.

Now that the Chabad building is complete, and the Friends of Lubavitch v. Robin Zoll is over, this latest Petition incredulously seeks ratification by the County of the unapproved use which has been ongoing since 2008. In light of the Case history, the instant Variance Petition is disingenuous in stating that "No new building is proposed." And while it is obvious that no new building is proposed at this point in the story, this building could have been constructed smaller and designed to comply with both the bulk regulations and the RTA regulations. It is not lost that when it suited their end, Lubavitch/Rivkin claimed the building was only being used for the Rivkin family residence. Yet, as the Appellate Court of Maryland explained in *Anderson v. Board of Appeals, Town of Chesapeake Beach*, 22 Md. App. 28, 322 A.2d 220 (1974), Lubavitch/Rivkin cannot now contend that the strict application of the BCZR prevents them from making a reasonable use of this DR 5.5 zoned Property because, by-right, it can always be used as a residence.

Dissecting the factual chronology from the above cases, the self-imposed hardship is evident. In Case No.: 2015-0223-SPH, the Petition itself was an admission of the unapproved religious use. Other than the desire for Lubavitch to be exempt from paying property taxes, there was no need to request approval for a 'parsonage' because again, Lubavitch/Rivkin could build a residential addition onto the home, without requesting any Variance relief. Indeed, Rivkin testified under oath that the proposed building would not be a synagogue or a community building.

Also factoring into the self-imposed hardship here was Lubavitch/Rivkin's Motion for Reconsideration in Case No.: 2015-0223-SPH seeking a finding that the Property was: "being used as a residence, and not as a religious institution or community building." While ALJ Beverungen

denied the Motion because it was beyond the scope of the Petition, the obvious reason for requesting that Order was due to dispose of the then-pending Code Enforcement Citation which was blocking their building permit application. Again, there was no need to file a Motion for Reconsideration in order for Rivkin to reside in the home.

In Case No.: 2016-0170-SPH, the filing of that Petition also does not help their claim of practical difficulty or unreasonable hardship. In the 2016 Case, Lubavitch/Rivkin switched positions and claimed that the mixed religious/residential use was suddenly only 'residential', notwithstanding that all of the evidence was the same. As set forth in the 2016-0170-SPH, the Protestants' evidence was that the religious use had not ceased, and that the proposed building was needed to accommodate that religious use. If the use was entirely residential as Lubavitch/Rivkin then alleged, it supports the conclusion here that no practical difficulty or hardship will be suffered because again Lubavitch/Rivkin can make reasonable use of the Property as a residence without the instant relief for a non-residential building.

As with the 2015 Motion for Reconsideration, and as recognized by the DOP and ALJ, the purpose of the 2016 Petition was to obtain a Zoning Order confirming residential use in defense of Code Violation Case (CC 1500406), and in turn, to get the building permit. Importantly, because no Variance relief from the residential bulk regulations was needed in 2016 for the 'residential addition,' this fact only serves to bolster the finding of self-imposed hardship requesting Variance relief for a non-residential principal building. And the 2016-0170-SPH Order achieved its desired effect in that, based on Rivkin's testimony under oath, the ALJ issued an Order granting approval for the 'residential addition,' which dismissed the Code Violation case, thereby releasing the building permit. As soon as the 2016-0170-SPH Order was appealed, Lubavitch/Rivkin withdrew the Petition, and the Protestants were left without an appeal.

Similarly, the Circuit Court findings of fact also lead to the same conclusion that any claim of practical difficulty or unreasonable hardship here has been self-imposed. Specifically, the Circuit Court emphasized that Lubavitch/Rivkin continued with a deliberate campaign of construction. For these reasons, the Variance relief will be denied.

As to the impact on the neighborhood and the spirit and intent of the BCZR, given the adjudicated findings of fact by the OAH, the Board of Appeals and Circuit Court and as reiterated by the Appellate Court of Maryland, I further find that granting the Variance relief for the non-residential building setback would do substantial injustice to the neighboring property owners, would be detrimental to the general welfare of the neighborhood, and cannot be granted in any way that would observe the strict harmony with spirit and intent of the BCZR, §307.1. *Anderson v. Bd. of Appeals, Town of Chesapeake Beach*, 22 Md. App. 28, 39 (1974). Accordingly, for these additional reasons, the Variance relief will be denied.

SPECIAL HEARING

A "special hearing" request under BCZR §500.7 "is, in legal effect, a request for a declaratory judgment." *Antwerpen v. Baltimore County*, 163 Md. App. 194, 877 A.2d 1166, 1175 (2005). This regulation gives the Administrative Law Judge the authority to interpret the county zoning regulations and to grant appropriate relief based on those interpretations. Further, "the administrative practice in Baltimore County has been to determine whether the proposed Special Hearing [request] would be compatible with the community and generally consistent with the spirit and intent of the regulations." *Kiesling v. Long*, Unreported Opinion, No. 1485, Md. App. (Sept. Term 2016). Given the denial of the Variance relief as above, Petition for Special Hearing need not be decided.

In the alternative, I find that the Special Hearing relief is precluded under the doctrine of *res judicata* and collateral estoppel because all of the relief requested here, could have been brought in Case No.: 2015-0223-SPH, Case No.: 2016-0170-SPH and/or 2016-0308-SPH. It is readily apparent that Lubavitch/Rivkin intentionally did not file the relief sought here in either 2015 or 2016 because it would have been met with substantial opposition. However, the doctrine of *res judicata* bars litigation of the same matter with respect not only to the legal claims or issues decided in the case but also as to all matters which could have been litigated in the first suit. The Court of Appeals in *Alvey v. Alvey*, 225 Md. 386, 390 (1961) said:

The doctrine of *res judicata* is that a judgment between the same parties and their privies is a final bar to any other suit upon the same cause of action, and is conclusive, not only as to all matters which with propriety could have been decided in the original suit, but as to all matters which with propriety could have been litigated in the first suit,...

(See also, Seminary Galleria v. Dulaney Valley Improvement Ass'n, 192 Md. App. 719, 995, A.2d 1068 (2010). Batson v. Shiflett, 325 Md. 684, 705, 602 A.2d 1191 (Md., 1992). Whittle v. Board of Zoning Appeals, 211 Md. 36, 38, 125 A.2d 41 (1956). Garrity v. Maryland State Bd. of Plumbing, 447 Md. 359, 368 (2016). Colandrea v. Wilde Lake Community Ass'n, Inc., 361 Md. 391 (2000); Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission v. TKU Associates, 281 Md. 1, 18-19 (1977)). As demonstrated by the previously adjudicated fact, there has been zero change in circumstances to warrant revisiting relief that could have, and should have been previously raised in the earlier Cases.

To the extent there is even a suggestion that Lubavitch/Rivkin was unaware of what regulations were required to be met, the evidence is overwhelmingly to the contrary. First, when they received the Code Enforcement Citation dated March 25, 2015, they knew they were illegally operating a religious institution without the benefit of filing for Special Exception, and without

meeting RTA requirements, parking requirements and bulk regulations. On this point, the Code Enforcement Citation was issued prior to the filing of Case No.: 2015-0233-SPH, before the Building Permit was issued on April 19, 2016, and before a shovel was in the ground on June 6, 2016. Second, when the 2015 Building Permit was denied, according to Scott Dallas' testimony in the Circuit Court trial, they were informed that a Special Exception was required and that the RTA requirements had to be met. Third, they knew when the DOP provided a ZAC comment in 2015-0223-SPH that a Special Exception was required, and that the RTA requirements had to be met. At that point, Lubavitch Rifkin could have, but failed to, amend the 2015 Petition to seek the necessary relief. In the same way, in 2016-0170-SPH, Lubavitch/Rivkin had yet another chance to file for the appropriate relief and failed to do so. Lastly, when the neighboring property owners filed Case No.: 2016-0308-SPH specifically requesting a ruling on the use and Lubavitch/Rivkin's alleged violation, the instant relief was not filed. Thus, no credible argument can be entertained as to a lack of knowledge.

Weighing the notice provided in the Code Enforcement Citation, in the denial of the 2015 Building Permit, in the 2015 Order, in the 2016-0170-SPH Order, and 17-0308-SPH Order against the bald assertion that current request for approval that the new building was "planned in such a way that compliance, to the extent possible with RTA use requirements, will be maintained and that said plan [is] otherwise expected to be compatible with the character and general welfare of the surrounding residential premises" defies any reasonable finding that the RTA exemptions under either BCZR, §1B01.1.B.1.g(6) or (10), have been met. Lubavitch/Rivkin ignored the RTA requirements and constructed what they wanted.

Under the doctrines of *res judicata* and collateral estoppel, the adjudications made in the prior Cases are binding here and cannot be relitigated. Rivkin testified under oath in 2015-0223-

SPH that the Property was not being used as a synagogue or as a community building. ALJ Beverungen's denial of the request for approval of a 'parsonage' in Case No.: 2015-0233-SPH bars any different outcome here. As a result, Special Hearing Request #1 and Special Exception Request #1 must be denied for that reason. ALJ's Opinion and Order in the 2016-0170-SPH made two (2) decisions which are both binding and cannot be now relitigated. First, the ALJ decision that that the Property cannot be used either as a synagogue or a community building precludes the instant relief:

Petitioner cannot use the property as a church, synagogue or community building; that much is clear from the prior order and the BCZR.

(2016-0170-SPH Order, p. 2). Second, and equally as important, the 2016-0170-SPH Order approved the use of the new building <u>only</u> as a residential dwelling:

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED this 6th day of April, 2016 by this Administrative Law Judge, that the Petition for Special Hearing pursuant to BCZR, §500.7 to approve the construction of a structural addition to an existing single family residential dwelling to be used as additional living space for the family who reside therein, be and is hereby GRANTED.

No appeal was filed by Lubavitch/Rivkin in 2015-0223-SPH, 2016-0170-SPH or 2016-0308-SPH. Given the pertinent decisions made in the 2016-0170-SPH Order, the 2024, after-the-fact zoning Petitions have no merit.

In regard to the Board of Appeals' decision in 2016-0308-SPH, it was akin to a Code Enforcement decision albeit in a Special Hearing, without a civil penalty. The Board's finding that Lubavitch/Rivkin had been using the property as a community center "without having obtained the necessary approvals or complying the necessary regulations, including the Residential Transition Area requirements" is not only consistent with each of the other Cases discussed herein, but supports the conclusion that the ship has sailed on the 2024 zoning Petitions.

In regard to the Special Hearing request for a modified parking plan under BCZR, §408.12B to approve the use of 2 parking spaces in the existing car port of the original home, in lieu of the required 23 parking spaces required for a non-residential building, Lubavitch/Rivkin have failed to meet the burden of proof for a "undue hardship" which requires:

§ 409.12. - Other requirements.

* * * *

B. If the requirements for parking space or loading space in Section 409 would create an undue hardship, the Zoning Commissioner may approve a modified plan upon petition and after a public hearing, the procedure for which is set forth in Section 409.8.B.1 above.

As set forth above, the only hardship is the one created by Lubavitch/Rivkin after-the-fact. As a residence, Lubavitch/Rivkin does not need any type of modified parking plan. As the DPWT ZAC comment opposing the Variance request and modified parking plan highlights, the on-street frontage parking, and parking on the other side of the street is restricted and therefore does not come close to meeting the parking required for the religious use:

A) The site provides parking via curb cut onto the grassy area on the property. The on-street frontage has parking restrictions. The other side of the street across the site frontage has timed parking restrictions. In consideration to the required parking quota and the available parking in the vicinity, DPWT is not in favor for granting a variance or waiver for on-site parking reductions.

To get around the parking requirements for the non-residential building, Lubavitch/Rivkin attempt to assert that, of the hundreds of people invited to the Property for the Chabad programs, for High Holidays, as well as the 50+ regular attendees at the Shabbat weekly dinner, all of them walk to the Property. To the contrary, the adjudicated fact in Board of Appeals Opinion was that the

invitees to the Property have continuously used up all the on-street parking. The doctrines of *res judicata* and collateral estoppel precludes a different finding here.

For all these reasons, the Special Hearing relief will be denied.

SPECIAL EXCEPTION

Under Maryland law, a special exception use enjoys a presumption that it is in the interest of the general welfare, and therefore, valid. *Schultz v. Pritts*, 291 Md. 1, 11 (1981). The *Schultz* standard was revisited in *Attar v. DMS Tollgate, LLC*, 451 Md. 272 (2017), where the court of appeals discussed the nature of the evidentiary presumption in special exception cases. The court again emphasized a special exception is properly denied only when there are facts and circumstances showing that the adverse impacts of the use at the particular location in question would be above and beyond those inherently associated with the special exception use.

Given the denial of the Variance relief as above, Petition for Special Exception need not be decided. In the alternative, the Petition for Special Exception relief for a Community Building is also barred under doctrine of res judicata, collateral estoppel for the same reasons as set forth in the Special Hearing section above. In particular, the 2016-0170-SPH Order already rendered a decision that the Property cannot be used for a community building and Lubavitch/Rivkin failed to appeal that decision. Accordingly, the Special Exception will also be denied.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED this <u>29th</u> day of July, 2024 by this Administrative Law Judge, that the Petition for Special Hearing to approve a Jewish Student Center/Jewish Learning Center in the style of a "Chabad House" with accessory parsonage use for resident Rabbi and family, as a use permitted by right under Baltimore County Zoning Regulations ("BCZR"), §1B01.1.A.3 (Churches, other buildings for religious worship or other religious institutions) be, and it is hereby, **DENIED**; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, that the Petition for Special Hearing to approve the site plan

for the proposed use in accordance with BCZR, §1B01.1.B.1.g(6) and/or §1B01.1.B.1.g(10),

including a finding that the restrictions of BCZR, §1B01.1.B.1.e(1) through (5) do not apply, be,

and it is hereby, **DENIED**; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, that the Petition for Special Hearing to approve a modified

parking plan pursuant to BCZR, §409.12.B, to allow 2 parking spaces to serve the proposed use in

lieu of 23 spaces required, or in lieu of such other number of parking spaces as may be required

for the proposed use under BCZR, §409.6, be, and it is hereby, **DENIED**; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, that a Petition for Special Exception filed for a Jewish

Student Center/Jewish Learning Center in the style of a "Chabad House" with accessory parsonage

use for resident Rabbi and family, pursuant to BCZR, §1B01.1.C.4 (civic, social, recreational or

educational uses) be, and it is hereby, **DENIED**; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, that the Petition for Variance from BCZR, §1B01.2.C.1.a,

for existing interior side yard setbacks in one instance of 8 ft. and in one instance of 13 ft. in lieu

of 20 ft. required, be, and is it hereby **DENIED**; and,

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, that the Petition for Variance from BCZR, §301.1 for an

existing carport with a side yard setback of 7 ft. in lieu of 15 ft. required, be, and is it hereby

DENIED.

Any appeal of this decision must be made within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order.

MAUREEN E. MURPHY

Mauren E. Murphy

Chief Administrative Law Judge

for Baltimore County

MEM:dlm

25



PETITION FOR ZONING HEARING(S)

	rtment of Permits, Approvals and Inspections aw of Baltimore County for the property located at:
Address 14 Aigburth Road	which is presently zoned DR 5.5
Deed References: 27395/112	10 Digit Tax Account # 0922250090
Property Owner(s) Printed Name(s) Friend	
(SELECT THE HEARING(S) BY MARKING \underline{X} AT THE APP	ROPRIATE SELECTION AND PRINT OR TYPE THE PETITION REQUEST)
	te in Baltimore County and which is described in the description made a part hereof, hereby petition for:
1. v a Special Hearing under Section 500.7 of the Z or not the Zoning Commissioner should approve	Zoning Regulations of Baltimore County, to determine whether
Please see attachment.	
2. v a Special Exception under the Zoning Regulation Please see attachment.	ions of Baltimore County to use the herein described property for
	the zoning law of Baltimore County, for the following reasons: Ity or indicate below "TO BE PRESENTED AT HEARING". If
you need additional space, you may add an attack	
To be presented at hearing.	
and restrictions of Baltimore County adopted pursuant to the zoning la	ting, etc. and further agree to and are to be bounded by the zoning regulations
Contract Purchaser/Lessee:	Legal Owners (Petitioners):
N/A	Friends of Lubavitch, Inc.
Name- Type or Print	Name #1-Type or Print Name #2 - Type or Print Menachem KIV Kin, Director
Signature	Signature #1 Signature #2
Mailing Address City State	
	21286 /646-295-3010 / mendyriv@gmail.co

N/A Name- Type Signature Mailing Addre Zip Code Telephone # **Email Address** Attorney for Petitioner: Dino C. La Fiandra, Esquire The Law Office of Dino C. La Fiandra, LLC Name-Type or Print Signature 100 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 305 Towson, Maryland 21204 Mailing Address City State 21204 443-204-3473 /dcl@lafiandralaw.com Zip Code Telephone #

CASE NUMBER 2024-0112-59+4 Filing Date 4 123 24

Email Address

Zip Code Telephone # **Email Address** Representative to be contacted: Dino C. La Fiandra, Esquire The Law Office of Dino C. La Fiandra, LLC Name - Type or Print Signature 100 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 305 Mailing Address City State 21204 443-204-3473 /dcl@lafiandralaw.com Zip Code Telephone # **Email Address**

Do Not Schedule Dates: Reviewer

Petition for Zoning Hearing 14 Aigburth Road Continuation Sheet

Special Hearing:

- To approve a Jewish Student Center / Jewish Learning Center in the style of a "Chabad House" with accessory parsonage use for resident Rabbi and family, as a use permitted by right under BCZR, §1B01.1.A.3 ("Churches, other buildings for religious worship or other religious institutions").
- 2. To approve the site plan for the proposed use in accordance with BCZR, §1B01.1.B.1.g(6) and/or §1B01.1.B.1.g(10), including a finding that the restrictions of BCZR, §1B01.1.B.1.e(1) through (5) do not apply.
- To approve a modified parking plan pursuant to BCZR, §409.12.B, to allow 2 parking spaces to serve the proposed use in lieu of 23 spaces required, or in lieu of such other number of parking spaces as may be required for the proposed use under BCZR, §409.6.
- 4. Such further and other relief as the nature of this case may require.

Special Exception:

 If the ALJ determines that the proposed use should not be approved by right pursuant to Special Hearing Request 1, then a Special Exception for a Jewish Student Center / Jewish Learning Center in the style of a "Chabad House" with accessory parsonage use for resident Rabbi and family, pursuant to BCZR, §1B01.1.C.4 ("civic, social, recreational or educational uses").

Variances:

- From BCZR, §1B01.2.C.1.a for existing interior side yard setbacks in one instance of 8
 feet and in one instance of 13 feet in lieu of 20 feet required. No new building is
 proposed.
- 2. From BCZR, §301.1 for an existing carport with a side yard setback of 7 feet in lieu of 15 feet required. No new building is proposed.

2024-0112-SPHA

J.S. DALLAS, INC.

Surveying & Engineering P.O. Box 26 Baldwin, MD 21013 (410)817-4600 FAX (410)817-4602

ZONING DESCRIPTION OF # 14 AIGBURTH ROAD

BEGINNING at a point on the south side of Aigburth Road (50 feet wide), at the distance of 130.55 feet, more or less, west of the west side of Cedar Avenue (30 feet wide)

THENCE the following courses and distances: (1) South 20 degrees 00 minutes West 218.42 feet (2) North 71 degrees 08 minutes West 76.85 feet (3) North 19 degrees 11 minutes East 218.42 feet and (4) South 71 degrees 08 minutes east 80.00 feet to the place of beginning as recorded in deed Liber 27395 folio 112 etc., containing 17,122 square feet or 0.393 acres of land, more or less. Located in the 9 th election district and 6 th council district.



2024-0112-SPHA

DEPARTMENT OF PERMITS, APPROVALS AND INSPECTIONS ZONING REVIEW OFFICE

ADVERTISING REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR ZONING HEARINGS

The <u>Baltimore County Zoning Regulations</u> (BCZR) require that notice be given to the general public/neighboring property owners relative to property which is the subject of an upcoming zoning hearing. For those petitions which require a public hearing, this notice is accomplished by posting a sign on the property (responsibility of the legal owner/petitioner) and placement of a notice in a newspaper of general circulation in the County, both at least twenty (20) days before the hearing.

Zoning Review will ensure that the legal requirements for advertising are satisfied. However, the legal owner/petitioner is responsible for the costs associated with these requirements. The newspaper will bill the person listed below for the advertising. This advertising is due upon receipt and should be remitted directly to the newspaper.

OPINIONS MAY NOT BE ISSUED UNTIL ALL ADVERTISING COSTS ARE PAID.

For Newspaper Advertising:				
Case Number: 2024-01	12-SPHA			
Property Address: 14 Aigburt	h Road			
Property Description: 0.39 Ac	res SS Aigburth Road 210 feet W of Cedar Avenue			
Legal Owners (Petitioners): Friends of Lubavitch, Inc.				
Contract Purchaser/Lessee: N	/A			
PLEASE FORWARD ADVERTISING BILL TO:				
Name:	Dino C. La Fiandra, Esquire			
Company/Firm (if applicable): The Law Office of Dino C. La Fiandra, LLC				
Address:	100 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 305			
	Towson, Maryland 21204			
Telephone Number:	443-204-3473			

DEPARTMENT OF PERMITS, APPROVALS AND INSPECTIONS ZONING REVIEW OFFICE

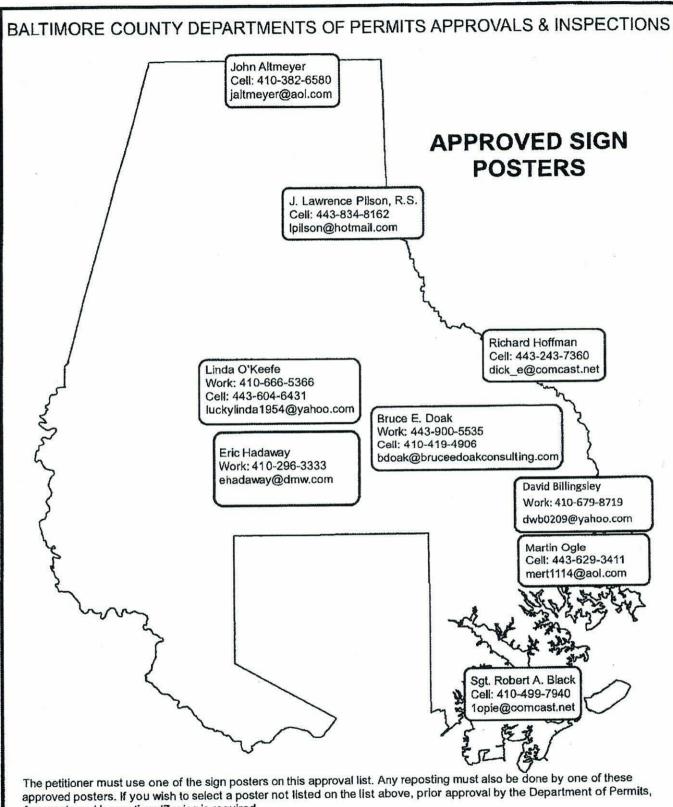
ADVERTISING REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR ZONING HEARINGS

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PLEASE FORWARD ADVERTISING BILL TO:					
Name:	Dino C. La Fiandra, Esquire				
Company/Firm (if applicable): The Law Office of Dino C. La Fiandra, LLC					
Address:	100 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 305				
	Towson, Maryland 21204				
Telephone Number:	443-204-3473				



Approvals and Inspections/Zoning is required.

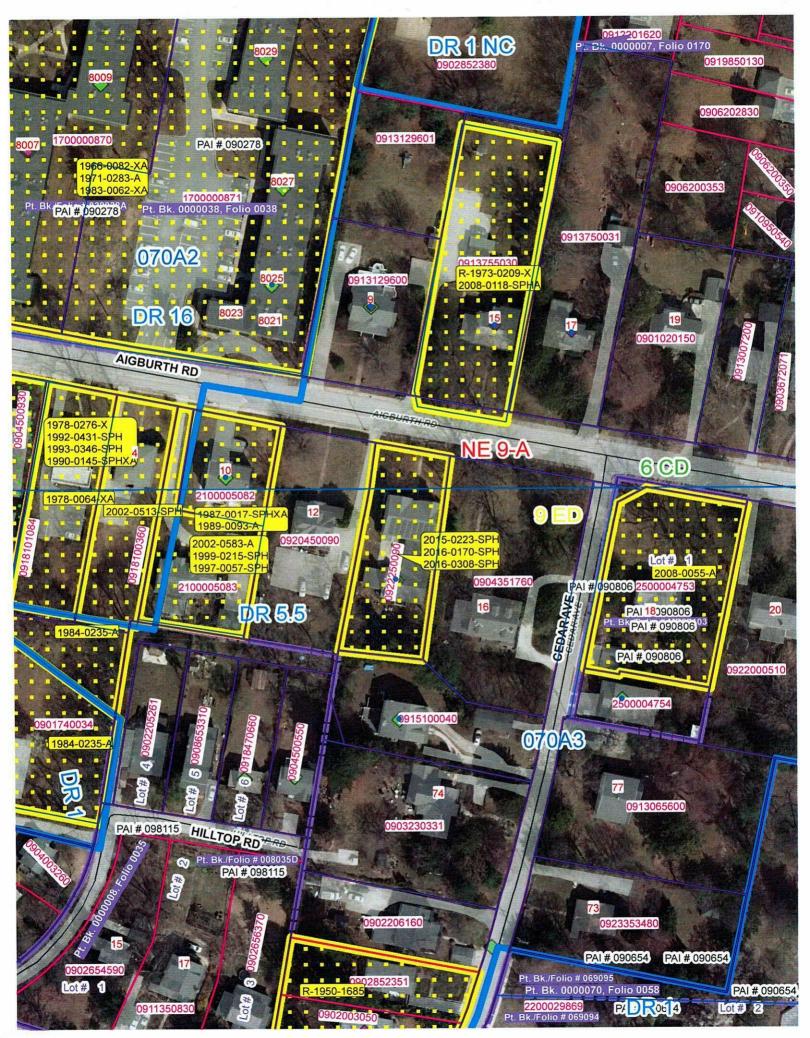
This department is not associated with any of the above posters, nor do we recommend any specific one. We do suggest that you contact a number of them to compare prices, since their charges may vary.

Rev 9/22/2022

Real Property Data Search () Search Result for BALTIMORE COUNTY

View Map	View GroundRent Red	demption	View Ground	Kent Registra	ation
Special Tax Recapture	e: None				
Account Identifier:	District - 09 Ac	count Number - 0	922250090		
	Ow	ner Informatio	on		
Owner Name:	FRIENDS OF L	FRIENDS OF LUBAVITCH INC Use: EXEMPT COMMER Principal Residence: NO		MMERCIA	
Mailing Address:	14 AIGBURTH TOWSON MD 2	RD De	eed Reference:	/27395/ 0011	2
	Location 8	Structure Inf	formation		
Premises Address:	14 AIGBURTH TOWSON 2128		egal Description:	CHAR EX 14 AIGBURT 210 W OF CI	
	eighborhood: Subdiv	ision: Section:	Block: Lot: Asses	sment Year:	Plat No
Town: None					
Primary Structure Bu	ilt Above Grade Living	Area Finished Bas	ement Area Proper		County U
StoriesBasementType			hGarageLast Notic	e of Major Im	proveme
	NDARD UNITBRICK/ 4	2 full	2017	e or major	p.o.o.
	Va	lue Informatio	on.		
	Base Value	Value As of 01/01/2023	Phase-in Ass As of 07/01/2023	As of 07/01/2	024
Land:	94,200	94,200			
Improvements	814,500	944,100			
Total:	908,700	1,038,300	951,900	995,100)
Preferential Land:	0	0			
	Trai	nsfer Informat	tion		
Seller: DOTT JACKSO	DN Y D	Date: 10/16/2008		Price: \$525,000	
Type: ARMS LENGTH	I IMPROVED D	eed1: /27395/ 0011	2 0	eed2:	
Seller: DOTT JACKSO	DN Y D	ate: 03/31/2008	P	rice: \$0	
Type: NON-ARMS LE	NGTH OTHER D	eed1: /26829/ 0057	78 C	eed2:	
Seller: DOTT ESTHER	₹J D	ate: 11/29/1990	P	Price: \$0	
Type: NON-ARMS LE	NGTH OTHER D	eed1: /08659/ 0076	54 C	Deed2:	
	Exen	nption Informa	ation		
Partial Exempt Asses	ssments: Class	0	7/01/2023	07/01/2024	
County:	700	9	51,900.00	995,100.00	
State:	700		51,900.00	995,100.00	
Municipal:	700	0	.00 0.00	0.00 0.00	
Special Tax Recaptu	re: None				
	Homestead	Application I	Information		
	on Status: No Application				
Homestead Applicati					
	Homeowners' Tax		cation Informa	ition	

2024-0112-SPHA





Permits, Approvals and Inspections

111 W CHESAPEAKE AVE TOWSON, MD 21204 4108873353 WWW.BALTIMORECOUNTYMD.GO

Cashier: Tyler C.

Transaction 102232

Total

\$1,200.00

CREDIT CARD SALE VISA 8825

\$1,200.00

Retain this copy for statement validation

Station: Permit Processing - Mini

04-Apr-2024 10:05:45A \$1,200.00 | Method: CONTACTLESS VISA CREDIT XXXXXXXXXXXX8825 VISA CARDHOLDER Reference ID: 409500558766 Auth ID: 06350G MID: ********2995 AID: A0000000031010 AthNtwkNm: VISA

Payment TPMJSMW801G76

SIGNATURE

Clover Privacy Policy https://clover.com/privacy

2024-0112-SPHA

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: C. Pete Gutwald **DATE:** 5/13/2024

Director, Department of Permits, Approvals and Inspections

FROM: Steve Lafferty

Director, Department of Planning

SUBJECT: ZONING ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Case Number: 2024-0112-SPHA

INFORMATION:

Property Address: 14 Aigburth Road

Petitioner: Friends of Lubavitch, Inc.

Zoning: DR 5.5

Requested Action: Special Hearing, Special Exception, Variance

The Department of Planning has reviewed the petition for the following:

Special Hearing -

- 1. To approve a Jewish Student Center/Jewish Learning Center in the style of a "Chabad House" with an accessory parsonage use for resident Rabbi and Family, as a use permitted by right under Baltimore County Zoning Regulations (BCZR) Section 1B01.1.A.3 ("Churches, other buildings for religious worship or other religious institutions");
- 2. To approve the site plan for the proposed use in accordance with BCZR Section 1B01.1.B.1.g(6) and/or Section 1B01.1.B.1.g(10), including a finding that the restrictions of BCZR Section 1B01.1.B.1.e(1) through (5) do not apply;
- 3. To approve a modified parking plan pursuant to BCZR Section 409.12.B to allow two parking spaces to serve the proposed use in lieu of the 23 spaces required, or in lieu of such other number of parking spaces as may be required for the proposed use under BCZR Section 409.6; and
- 4. Any such further and other relief as the nature of this case may require.

Special Exception -

1. If the Administrative Law Judge determines that the proposed use should not be approved by right pursuant to Special Hearing Request # 1, then a Special Exception for a Jewish Student Center/Jewish Learning Center in the style of a "Chabad House" with an accessory parsonage use for resident Rabbi and Family, pursuant to BCZR Section 1B01.1.C.4 ("Civic, social, recreational or educational spaces").

Variance -

- 1. From BCZR Section 1B01.2.C.1.a for existing interior side yard setbacks in one instance of 8 feet and in one instance of 13 feet in lieu of the 20 feet required (no new building is proposed); and
- 2. From BCZR Section 301.1 for an existing carport with a side yard setback of 7 feet in lieu of the 15 feet required (no new building is proposed).

The subject site is an approximately 17,004 square foot parcel in the Towson area. It is located along Aigburth Road, which is located off of York Road across from the Towson University campus. The site is improved with a three-story brick and stone building, which was constructed in 1952 and is not homeowner occupied, per the State Department of Assessments and Taxation website.

Uses surrounding the subject site are primarily residential and include single family detached residential dwellings and an apartment complex. Additional uses near the subject site also include an Assisted Living Facility, a church, Towson High School, and Towson University.

The site has been the subject of three past Zoning Cases – Case 2015-0223-SPH, Case 2016-0170-SPH, and Case 2016-0308-SPH – which are briefly summarized below:

- Case 2015-0223-SPH was filed on April 14th, 2014 and involved a request for a Special Hearing pursuant to Section 500.7 of the BCZR to confirm continued use of the subject property as a residential parsonage with an accessory use for religious worship and religious education. The Administrative Law Judge found that the structure at 14 Aigburth Road did not qualify, as a parsonage is an adjunct or accessory structure near or on the same grounds as a church, synagogue or other house of worship, and there was no synagogue to which the parsonage would be appurtenant. As such, the Special Hearing was denied. Following the Opinion and Order, the attorney for the Petitioner requested a clarification as to what the property was (i.e. a residence, not a House of Worship/Religious Institution or a Community Building). The Administrative Law Judge treated the request as a Motion for Consideration. The Motion for Consideration was denied, with the Opinion and Order stating that the request was beyond the scope of the zoning request filed with the County.
- Case 2016-0170-SPH was filed on January 20th, 2016 and involved a request for a Special Hearing pursuant to Sections 500.7 and 1B01.1.A.1.a of the BCZR to approve the construction of an addition to an existing single family residential dwelling to be used as additional living space for the family who resides therein. The Department of Planning's comments on the Petition included: comments on why the Special Hearing was needed if the request was truly a residential addition to a residential dwelling in a residential zone; comments that a February 5th, 2016 site visit confirmed the existence of a sign in front of the property clearly indication that the property is a Chabad House; and comments that use of the property as a civic, social, or commercial space would be contrary to the Towson Community Plan and Master Plan 2020. The Special Hearing in Case 2016-0170-SPH was granted. On June 22nd, 2016, members of the Towson community filed an appeal to the Baltimore County Board of Appeals. Because of the similarities in Case 2016-0170-SPH and 2016-0308-SPH, discussed below, a motion was made to consolidate the two cases into one Board of Appeals Hearing.
- Case 2016-0308-SPH was filed on June 3rd, 2016 and involved a request for a Special Hearing to determine what the use of the property was under the BCZR and to determine whether the current use of the property constituted a violation of or noncompliance with the BCZR. The Case was filed by neighbors at 16, 18, 18 ½, 20, 21, and 23 Aigburth Road; 74, 76, and 81 Cedar Avenue; and 8 and 9 Maryland Avenue. On July 25th, 2016, the case was dismissed with prejudice by the Administrative Law Judge. On August 8th, 2016 the Petitioner's filed an appeal to the Baltimore County Board of Appeals. The September 5th, 2017 Opinion by Board of Appeals stated that there was credible evidence that established the subject site had been used and was intended to be used in the future as both a dwelling and a community center by the Petitioner and resident Rabbi, and that the use of the site as a community center would require a Special Exception and compliance with the Residential Transition Area (RTA) requirements. The Order states that Board of Appeals grants the Protestant's Petition in the form of a declaratory judgement, further stating "a request for a Special Hearing is, in effect, a request for a declaratory judgement".

From January 2015 until January 2023, the site was the subject of 21 Code Enforcement complaints. Complaints ranged in topic from operating a community center/church without proper approval, trash/debris outside, tall grass, and untagged vehicles. As of the date of these comments, all of the Code Enforcements complaints are marked as Duplicate Review, No Violation, In Compliance, or Closed on Baltimore County's Citizen Access database; no Cases are currently active or on a Monitor status with Code Enforcement.

The subject site is within the boundary of the Southeast Towson Community Plan, adopted October 19th, 1998, and the Towson Community Plan, adopted February 3rd, 1992. The Southeast Towson Community Plan calls out problems such as repeat Code Enforcement violations, traffic, and parking. The Towson Community Plan provides information on land uses, urban design, and community conservation, and provides implementation objectives on how to better the plan area. Map 1 of the Towson Community Plan maps the property as part of the Inner Neighborhood, which are "those residential areas closest to the commercial core and are most directly impacted by development and traffic pressures extending from the town center" (page 5, 68). The plan warns against Special Exceptions impacting these neighborhoods by bringing in more traffic and creating an ambience more suited to a business community than to a residential community (pages 69-70).

The Department of Planning met with the representative for the Petition via WebEx on May 9th, 2024. During the meeting, the representative provided the Department with the following information:

- The requests at hand are to legitimize the current use of the property as a Chabad House, which is a Jewish community learning center.
- A resident Rabbi, his wife, and their children live at the property/in the structure.
- No new construction or changes to the property are proposed at this time.
- On May 24th, 2022, the property owner entered into a Settlement Agreement and Release with Baltimore County that called for a Settlement Payment and release of all claims.
- During the week, the resident Rabbi hosts small services at the property. On Friday evenings, the resident Rabbi hosts Shabbat dinner at the property. This includes approximately 60 Towson University students coming over to the property. The majority of the students walk to the property for these events.
- The property owner of the subject site also owns the immediately adjoining property at 12 Aigburth Road. 12 Aigburth Road has nine parking spaces, so if students do drive, they can park in one of the two spaces at 14 Aigburth Road, or in one of the nine spaces at 12 Aigburth Road. There have been no issues with parking.
- There is a half wall in front of the subject site, a 6' tall solid wooden fence between 14 Aigburth Road and 16 Aigburth Road, a 6' tall solid wooden fence between 14 Aigburth Road and 76 Cedar Avenue (behind the subject site), and existing shrubs along the property line to screen the structure from the immediately adjoining neighbors to the greatest extent possible.

Following the meeting, the representative for the petition provided the Department with a copy of the Settlement Agreement and Release.

The Department of Planning has no objections to the requests for Variances for side yard setbacks for the existing dwelling and the existing carport. As stated in the Petition and as shown on the site plan, no new structures are proposed, and the requests are for existing conditions, which have been as such for years. Approval of the Variance will bring the setbacks into compliance.

The Department of Planning has no objections to the requested Special Hearing for a modified parking plan as the majority of the visitors to the subject site walk to attend events. Further, between the subject

site and 12 Aigburth Road, which is also owned by the Petitioner/property owner, eleven parking spaces are provided.

The Department of Planning has no objections to the requested Special Hearing to approve the site plan for the proposed use in accordance with BCZR Section 1B01.1.B.1.g(6) and/or Section 1B01.1.B.1.g(10). The subject site is screened to the greatest extent possible with the wall, fence, and shrubbery.

The Department of Planning is accepting of the Administrative Law Judge's decision on the request for Special Hearing to approve a Jewish Student Center/Jewish Learning Center in the style of a "Chabad House" with an accessory parsonage use for resident Rabbi and Family, as a use permitted by right under Baltimore County Zoning Regulations (BCZR) Section 1B01.1.A.3 or, in the alternative, a Special Exception for a Jewish Student Center/Jewish Learning Center in the style of a "Chabad House" with an accessory parsonage use for resident Rabbi and Family, pursuant to BCZR Section 1B01.1.C.4. Should the Administrative Law Judge be accepting of the use of the property as a Jewish Student Center/Jewish Learning Center, the Department defers to the Administrative Law Judge on which course of action – the Special Hearing or Special Exception – is appropriate.

For further information concerning the matters stated herein, please contact Taylor Bensley at 410-887-3482.

Division Chief:

Jenifer G. Nugent

Prepared by:

Krystle Patchak

SL/JGN/KP

c: Dino C. La Fiandra, Esquire David Birkenthal, Community Planner Jeff Perlow, Zoning Review Kristen Lewis, Zoning Review Office of Administrative Hearings People's Counsel for Baltimore County

CERTIFICATE OF POSTING

	20 RE: Case No.:)24-0112-SPHXA
	Petitioner/Developer:	
		f Lubavitch, Inc.
	Date of Hearing/Closing:	June 25, 2024
Baltimore County Department of Permits, Approvals and Inspections County Office Building, Room 111 111 West Chesapeake Avenue Towson, Maryland 21204		
Attn: Jeff Perlow:		
Ladies and Gentlemen:		
This letter is to certify under the penalties of posted conspicuously on the property located		quired by law were
14 Aigburth Road		,
The sign(s) were posted on	June 3, 2024	
The sign(s) were posted on	(Month, Day, Year)	
	Sincerely,	
A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A	Mr. M. A.	June 3, 2024
OTTICE 2-SPHX 2-SPHX 1-SPHX	(Signature of Sign Poster)	(Date)
ING_NV 2024-011 2024-	SSG Robert Bl	ack
ZONIN ASE # 20. H Afpure 10. H	(Print Name	2)
06/03/2024	1508 Leslie Ro	ad
	(Address)	

Dundalk, Maryland 21222

(City, State, Zip Code)

(410) 282-7940

(Telephone Number)

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

Inter-Office Correspondence



TO: Hon. Maureen E. Murphy; Chief Administrative Law Judge

Office of Administrative Hearings

FROM: Jeff Livingston, Department of Environmental Protection and

Sustainability (EPS) - Development Coordination

DATE: May 7, 2024

SUBJECT: DEPS Comment for Zoning Item # 2024-0112-SPHXA

Address: 14 AIGBURTH RD Legal Owner: Friends of Lubavitch, Inc.

Zoning Advisory Committee Meeting of May 7, 2024.

X The Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability has no comment on the above-referenced zoning item.

Additional Comments:

Reviewer: Earl D. Wrenn

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

TO: Peter Gutwald, Director DATE: May 2, 2024

Department of Permits, Approvals

FROM: Vishnu Desai, Supervisor

Bureau of Development Plans Review

SUBJECT: Zoning Advisory Committee Meeting

Case 2024-0112-SPHXA

The Bureau of Development Plans Review has reviewed the subject zoning items and we have the following comments.

DPR: No comment.

DPW-T: A) The site provides parking via curb cut onto the grassy area on the property. The on-street frontage has parking restrictions. The other side of the street across the site frontage has timed parking restrictions. In consideration to the required parking quota and the available parking in the vicinity, DPWT is not in favor for granting a variance or waiver for on-site parking reductions.

Landscaping: No comment.

Recreations & Parks: No Greenways affected.

