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117 E. MAIN ST. MOUNT KISCO, NY 10549
(914) 740-4774 | IMAGINE@NEXUSCREATIVE.DESIGN

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October 14, 2025

Town of Ossining Planning Board
Attn: Carolyn Stevens, Chairperson
101 Route 9A - P.O. Box 1166
Ossining, NY 10562

Re: Response to Letter of Concern from Mr. Russel Watsky – St. Augustine's Chapel
Property: St. Augustine's Cemetery, Hawkes Avenue, Ossining, NY

Dear Chairperson Stevens and Members of the Planning Board,

On behalf of the applicant, we acknowledge receipt of the correspondence dated October 9, 2025, from Mr. Russel Watsky regarding the proposed chapel at St. Augustine's Cemetery. We appreciate the opportunity to provide the following responses and clarifications to the items noted.

Preliminary Note

The Short Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) was initially completed concurrent with assembling the full consultant team. Specifically, the civil engineer has further developed and refined several elements of the project. The following items provide clarification based on the current design status.

Item #11 – Wastewater / Septic System

A septic system is now proposed for the project. The system has been designed by the project's civil engineer and has been formally submitted to the Westchester County Department of Health for review and approval. The civil engineer (Alan Pilch) will continue to coordinate with the Health Department to ensure that the system complies with all applicable regulations and that it will operate safely without any adverse impact on adjacent properties or natural resources.

Item #13 – Wetlands and Waterbodies

As part of the team's environmental review, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) mapping was consulted, and no state-regulated wetlands were identified on or adjacent to the subject property.

The nearby Kill Brook is classified as a 'Riverine feature'. According to the Town of Ossining Wetlands Code (§183-17), the applicable buffer distances are:

1. For all water bodies and non-watercourse wetlands – 100 feet from the edge of the feature.
2. For all watercourses – 50 feet from the edge of the watercourse.

Based on this classification, Kill Brook would fall under the watercourse category, requiring a 50-foot buffer. The proposed project design exceeds this buffer distance, ensuring no disturbance occurs within the regulated area.

With regard to the proposed septic system for the Chapel, the Westchester County Department of Health requires a 100-foot separation between absorption trenches and a watercourse. The proposed absorption trenches are about 280 feet from Kill Brook, well over the minimum required separation distance.

Item #20 – Prior Landfill Activity / Soil Stability

The applicant continues to evaluate the historical information referenced regarding the property's prior fill characteristics and scope. Regardless of past site conditions, the structural integrity and soil stability of the site will be verified as part of the Building Permit process.

Soil testing will be completed once coordination with the Westchester County Department of Health is underway. As part of that testing, deep-hole and percolation tests will be performed, which will also confirm the nature and composition of the subsurface materials and fill that were placed on the site. Our team was aware of the prior filling, as this topic was raised during the pre-application meeting with the Town. The material placed during earlier grading work was completed under the appropriate application protocols in effect at that time.



In anticipation of potential variability in the subsurface conditions, conceptual budgeting has already been developed to account for a worst-case scenario, including the possible need to import engineered soils or undertake supplemental stabilization measures if required by future testing and engineering analysis. Further, given the small nature of the structure and building typology, means and methods of assuring proper load bearing requirements are relatively benign in this instance. These considerations have been incorporated into the project planning to ensure that the design and construction can proceed responsibly and in compliance with all applicable standards.

Regarding the color of the water observed in photographs of the Kill Brook, it should be noted that the orange or rust coloration could be due to a number of natural causes, including the presence of iron or other minerals, and is not necessarily related to any prior fill activity or construction work on the cemetery site. The proposed chapel construction is in a separate and isolated context which in no manner influences what may or may not be occurring in Kill Brook at any point by various potential circumstances along the watercourse.

Drawing PZ-1 – Site Features and Detention Basin

While confirmation of a detention basin on PZ-1 has not been confirmed, the civil engineer has reviewed the information and a revised version of Drawing S-101 will indicate the location of an existing detention basin in the southern portion of the property. The detention basin is situated a significant distance – about 700 feet – from the proposed leaching field and is not located within the path of the septic system's [path of drainage, which flows generally in a west-northwest direction.

PZ-1 – North Arrow Clarification

The north arrow on Drawing PZ-1 was rotated approximately [90] degrees to correctly align the plan with true north. This adjustment has no impact on the elevations or labeling as north is not directly perpendicular to any of the elevations of the building. All elevation references remain correctly identified relative to the updated orientation. Those familiar with the plans will readily recognize the front and rear of the chapel based on the site layout, and the side elevations remain mirrored versions of one another. The revision simply corrects the directional indicator for consistency and coordination across the full drawing set.

The applicant remains sincerely interested in listening to and processing stakeholders' concerns and observations. Related to Mr. Watsky's interest and subsequent letter, Town files reveal a legacy interest by Mr. Watsky towards fill activities beginning in late summer 1985. The record appears clear that while various municipal, applicant and stakeholder actions continued through 1988, the fill scenario on portions of this site were resolved by the summer of 1988. Reintroducing legacy observations 37 years later feels irrelevant to specific planning review items as it relates to the chapel application as clarified throughout the response.

We trust the above clarifications address the concerns raised and provide additional context for the Board's review. Should the Planning Board or any of its consultants wish to discuss these items in greater detail, we would be happy to provide further documentation or walk through them together at this week's meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jaclyn A. Tyler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jaclyn Tyler, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, NCARB
Principal

cc: Carolyn Stevens, Planning Board Chairperson
Alan Pilch, P.E., Civil Engineer
Russel Watsky