
STAFF COMMENTS FOR PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING DATE: January 21, 2009

SITE PLAN: **AFP-07-045**

TITLE: **SENECA CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH**

REQUEST: **CONSENT APPROVAL**
EXTENSION OF FINAL SITE PLAN
APPROVAL (Change of Use from Office to Church)

ADDRESS: 13 Firstfield Road

ZONE: E-1 (Urban Employment) Zone

APPLICANT: Seneca Creek Community Church

ARCHITECT: Duane, Cahill, Mullineaux & Mullineaux

ENGINEER: Macris, Hendricks, & Glascock, PA
(Paul Newman)

DEVELOPER: Synthesis, Inc

STAFF LIAISON: Caroline Seiden, Planner

Enclosures:

Staff Comments

Exhibit 1: Location Aerial Map

Exhibit 2: Letter from Jeannette Cochran, Executive Pastor, Seneca Creek Community Church, received December 31, 2008

Exhibit 3: Minutes of Planning Commission Meeting, February 13, 2008

STAFF COMMENTS

I. BACKGROUND:

The applicant is requesting an Extension of the Final Site Plan Approval. This property is located at 13 Firstfield Road in the Diamond Farm subdivision (see Exhibit #1). The property is situated on 2.21 acres of land and is currently developed with a 30,400 square foot office building. The applicant is requesting an Extension of the Final Site Plan Approval for the approved change of use from office to church.

Seneca Creek Community Church plans to modify the office building into a 26,000 square foot church. The remaining square footage will remain as unaltered office. This change in use requires several modifications to the existing parking lot to bring the site into conformance with ADA requirements, including sidewalk modifications and handicapped striping. On February 13, 2008, the Planning Commission granted Amendment to Final Plan approval to this development with four conditions and three parking waivers, as shown in the attached Planning Commission Minutes (Exhibit #3).

In accordance with § 24-173(a), the applicant has submitted a letter requesting extensions of the final site plan approval for AFP-07-045. This letter, received on December 31, 2008, is attached as Exhibit #2.

The property is in the Urban Employment (E-1) zone. The use is allowed by § 24-151(2) of the Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 24 of the City Code.

II. SCOPE OF REVIEW:

The approved site plan has not been constructed to date. Section 24-173 (a) states the following:

One or more of the uses proposed for land which is the subject of the site development plan shall be established on such land within three hundred sixty-five (365) days after the date of approval of the plan or the plan shall become void; provided, that the planning commission may extend such time upon request filed within such three hundred sixty-five (365) days and may grant further extensions upon request filed within the period of any extension; provided, that the total length of such extensions shall not exceed two (2) years.

Accordingly, the applicant is requesting an extension for the approved final site plan. The applicant may request one more extension next year, if necessary. If granted, this extension of approval expires February 13, 2010.

III. CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends **TO GRANT APPROVAL OF EXTENSION OF AMENDMENT TO FINAL PLAN AFP-07-045, Seneca Creek Community Church AS IT CONFORMS WITH §24-173, WITH THE ORIGINAL CONDITIONS AS APPROVED ON FEBRUARY 13, 2008.**

AFP-07-045

Seneca Creek Community Church



MD State Plane
HPGN NAD 83/91

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Planning Commission
AFP-07-045
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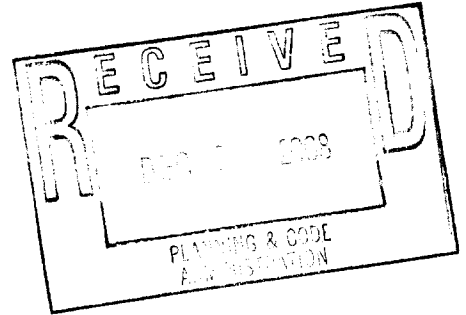
SENECA CREEK
COMMUNITY CHURCH

13 FIRSTFIELD ROAD GAITHERSBURG, MD 20878
301.355.6550 WWW.SENECACREEK.ORG

JEANNETTE COCHRAN

EXECUTIVE PASTOR

December 18, 2008



Gaithersburg Planning Commission
Gaithersburg City Hall
31 S. Summit Avenue
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
Attn: John Bauer, Chairman

Re: Seneca Creek Community Church
City Reference: AFP-07-045
MHG Project No. 2007.192.21

Mr. Bauer:

The referenced project was approved by the Planning Commission of the City of Gaithersburg at your meeting held on February 13, 2008. Contingency #3 of the Site Development Approval Letter requires that construction commence within three hundred and sixty five days of the date of Planning Commission approval. I would like to request an extension of this site plan approval. We are currently working to complete the fundraising necessary to begin this project.

Please contact either myself or the project engineer, Paul Newman, at Macris, Hendricks & Glascock, P.A. if I can be of any help or provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,

Jeannette Cochran
Executive Pastor

Planner Robinson stated this application was the subject of a joint public hearing on January 22, 2008, with the Planning Commission's record closing on February 6, 2008. He indicated this application proposes the reallocation of housing units between two of the six original pads on the sketch plan of Annexation Agreement X-182, reflecting the changes incorporated in an amendment to that agreement, currently under negotiation between the applicant and the City. He pointed out the original density caps for residential and commercial uses, as well as height limitations, remain unchanged. Mr. Robinson referenced the Staff Analysis of this application, noting it recommends approval with a condition as listed in the motion below.

In response to questions of Chair Bauer regarding the pedestrian system, Mr. Robinson noted on an aerial plan how the pedestrian connections/amenities would still be adequate with the subject proposal. Mr. Robinson also answered Commissioner Winborne's and Vice-Chair Levy's inquiries about the County's assurance of a public high school site and about the height of up to 20 stories of a proposed residential building in Neighborhood Five. Planning and Code Administration Director Ossont noted that particular development details would be considered at the time of each schematic development plan review. Chair Bauer additionally noted that this application for reallocating housing units from one pad to another is more of a housekeeping item.

Vice-Chair Levy moved, seconded by Commissioner Kaufman, to recommend to the City Council APPROVAL of Z-310, with the following condition:

1. Applicant and City shall record the Amendment to Annexation Agreement X-182 before approval of any future schematic development plan or amendment to schematic development plan applications.

Vote: 4-0

VI. SITE PLAN

<p>AFP-07-045 -- Seneca Creek Community Church 13 Firstfield Road Reuse from Office to Church AMENDMENT TO FINAL PLAN REVIEW</p>	<p>E-1 Zone</p>
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Planning Intern Meyer located the property on an aerial photograph and introduced the applicant.

Engineer for the applicant, Paul Newman, Macris, Hendricks & Glascock, PA, stated this proposal is for the conversion of 31,000 square feet of office to 26,000 square feet of church use, with the balance square footage remaining as office. He presented a colored site plan and discussed the existing conditions on the site and the proposed changes to accommodate the new use. He noted the relocation and addition of handicapped parking spaces, an additional sidewalk and crosswalk, as well as minor upgrades in landscaping and screening. Mr. Newman indicated this application includes two parking waiver requests to address the existing parking lot module widths and green space, which he discussed. He noted that a photometric plan would be submitted for review/approval by the Department of Public Works, Park Maintenance and Engineering (DPWPM&E).

Architect for the applicant, Donald Savage, Duane, Cahill, Mullineaux and Mullineaux, presented colored building elevations, noting the addition of a dome, window alterations and an exterior walkway. In response to Vice-Chair Levy, Mr. Savage discussed handicap access to

the building, noting four entrances and interior changes. Mr. Savage indicated the building would comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and added there would be no elevator. Regarding signage, he stated that no building signage is included with this application.

In response to Chair Bauer's inquiry about parking availability, Mr. Newman noted there is a parking agreement with the property across the street. Commissioner Kaufman voiced a concern over the safety of church goers crossing the street. Mr. Newman referenced Condition 3 and indicated that a crosswalk would be added after a monitoring period of six months if the DPWPM&E requires it, noting that traffic on Firstfield Road is minimal on Sundays. In response to Commissioner Winborne, Mr. Newman stated there are minimal opportunities for Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) credits, other than in lighting, because this plan is only for remodeling the building.

Seneca Creek Community Church Pastor Mark Tindle answered Commissioner Kaufman's question about other activities associated with the Church by noting there are no plans for significant classroom or daycare uses on weekdays.

There was no testimony from the public.

Mr. Meyer stated the plan meets the approval criteria of the City Code and voiced staff's recommendation for approval of the plan and waiver requests, with conditions as listed in the motion below.

The Commission briefly discussed ways to address the pedestrian safety issue if any measures are deemed necessary. Chair Bauer favored the placing of an identification sign on the building. Mr. Savage noted that an appropriate Church logo on the sky light would be considered. Commissioner Winborne commented favorably on the application.

Commissioner Winborne moved, seconded by Commissioner Kaufman, to grant AFP-07-045 - Seneca Creek Community Church, AMENDMENT TO FINAL PLAN APPROVAL, finding it in compliance with Zoning Ordinance §§ 24-170 and 24-172, with the following conditions:

1. The Planning Commission is to grant a waiver of 3.1 percent of the required eight (8) percent parking lot green space and an aisle width waiver of one (1) foot for the western drive aisle, and six (6) feet for the northern drive aisle;
2. The main parking lot is to be restriped with double stripes as required by the City of Gaithersburg standards at such time as the entire parking lot is resurfaced or restriped;
3. A crosswalk is to be built across Firstfield Road, at the expense of Seneca Creek Community Church, when DPWPM&E deems it necessary; and
4. A final photometric plan is to be approved by the DPWPM&E before the issuance of a building permit.

Vote: 5-0

Commissioner Winborne moved, seconded by Vice-Chair Levy, to grant the following PARKING WAIVERS:

1. A waiver of 3.1 percent of the parking lot green space requirement;
2. A module waiver of one foot for the western drive aisle; and
3. A module waiver of six feet for the northern drive aisle.

Vote: 5-0

VII. FROM THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Hopkins

Reported having attended several conference sessions on storm water management, noting there seems to be a movement now from state and county officials to grant quality credits to developments for creative technologies for storm water management practices that include green roofs, rain gardens, infiltration, etc. He encouraged the City to investigate and consider including in the City Code more creative practices to treat storm water management on sites.

VIII. FROM STAFF

Community Planning Director Schwarz

Noted the next regular meeting is on February 20, and listed upcoming joint hearings and work session.

Planning and Code Administration Director Ossont

1. Z-307 -- The Summit Rezoning from C-2 to MXD Zone
Goshen Road/Girard Street
Multifamily Residential/Commercial/Retail
With Structured Parking Development
Reopening of Public Hearing Record

Referenced a memorandum to the Commission dated January 29, 2008, recommending the reopening of the Planning Commission's public hearing record on the above-referenced application in order to allow for a joint work session with the City Council on February 25.

Commissioner Kaufman moved, seconded by Commissioner Winborne, to reopen the record on Z-307 and hold it open indefinitely.

Vote: 5-0

2. Introduced Planner Eliza Voigt, noting she would be liaison to the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee as well. The Commission welcomed her.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before this session, the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:45 p.m.