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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION

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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 3, 2024

Mr. Joseph Czajkowski, Manager
Lower Salford Township
379 Main Street
Harleysville, Pennsylvania 19438-2391

Re: MCPC #24-0158-002
Plan Name: Covenant Presbyterian Church of Harleysville building and parking lot expansion
(2 lots lot comprising approximately 11.27 acres)
Situate: Covenant Lane (cross street: Sumneytown Pike/Main Street)
Lower Salford Township

Dear Mr. Czajkowski:

We have reviewed the above-referenced subdivision and land development plan in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on November 21, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Covenant Presbyterian Church of Harleysville, is proposing a building and parking lot expansion for an existing church located in the R-1A Residential Zoning District. In addition, the applicant is proposing to merge the church parcel (no. 50-00-02900-002) with an abutting parcel (no. 50-00-02200-009) with frontage on Main Street and located in the VC Village Commercial District.

The property currently contains a 1-story church building and a parking lot with 106 parking spaces. Between the addition to the main parking lot and the additional lot with frontage on Main Street, there would be an additional 130 parking spaces. The proposed parking lot expansion (Lower Lot) would provide 86 parking spaces, and the parking lot with frontage on Main Street (Upper Lot) would provide 44 parking spaces. In total, there would be 236 parking spaces.

A sidewalk is proposed along Main Street and part of Covenant Lane, which will connect to the entrance of the church building. The proposed Lower Lot expansion would include a sidewalk to connect to the building addition entrance. The property contains an existing stormwater detention basin and easement. The proposal includes a new underground stormwater management system to accommodate the additional impervious coverage. Trees are proposed along Main Street and along the northern property line to screen the residential properties. We reviewed a previously submitted proposal for this site in a letter dated August 2, 2024.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The proposal is generally consistent with the county's comprehensive plan*, MONTCO 2040: A Shared Vision,* which shows the area as "Village Center." Village Centers are traditional village areas with a mix of retail, office, and residential uses, and usually have small separate buildings located close to each other. New residential development should respect the historic character of the village by being small in scale and locating parking behind buildings with common driveways when feasible. The proposal is generally consistent with the Indian Valley Regional Comprehensive Plan, as it is located in a Village Conservation area on the Future Land Use map. New in-fill development should be compatible with the existing character and heritage of the village.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal, however, in the course of our review we have identified the following issues that the applicant and township may wish to consider prior to final plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

LANDSCAPING

A. Parking Lot Landscaping. We wish to reiterate that we recommend planting additional trees around the perimeter of the expansion to the existing parking lot to add shade and soften the appearance of the large parking lot. Based on the plans provided, the applicant will plant four trees around the parking lot expansion. We feel that the existing parking lot would also benefit from additional trees along the southern side of the parking lot where there is an uninterrupted row of 15 parking spaces without shade trees. The number of parking lot landscape islands meet the subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) requirements regarding the maximum number of vehicle parking spaces in one row (a maximum of 15 is permitted, per § 142-35.E.(2)). However, based on our interpretation, the proposed landscaping does not meet the standards of the SALDO which requires that parking lots be "landscaped to provide shade in order to reduce the amount of reflected heat and to improve the aesthetics of parking lots" (§ 142-42.D(1)).

PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

We encourage the applicant to extend the sidewalk along the entire length of the property line on Main Street. The township's subdivision and land development ordinance requires sidewalks with a minimum width of 5 feet "wherever they fill a gap in an existing network" (§ 142-41.A). We feel that land developments are opportunities to contribute to the pedestrian network and suggest that the applicant and the township consider the importance of sidewalks in Vernfield and how they encourage people to walk to local destinations.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Lower Salford's planning objectives for development in the Village of Vernfield.

Please note that the review comments and recommendations contained in this report are advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

Should the governing body approve a final plat of this proposal, the applicant must present the plan to our office for seal and signature prior to recording with the Recorder of Deeds office. A paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval must be supplied for our files.

Please print the assigned MCPC number (24-0158-002) on any plans submitted for final recording.

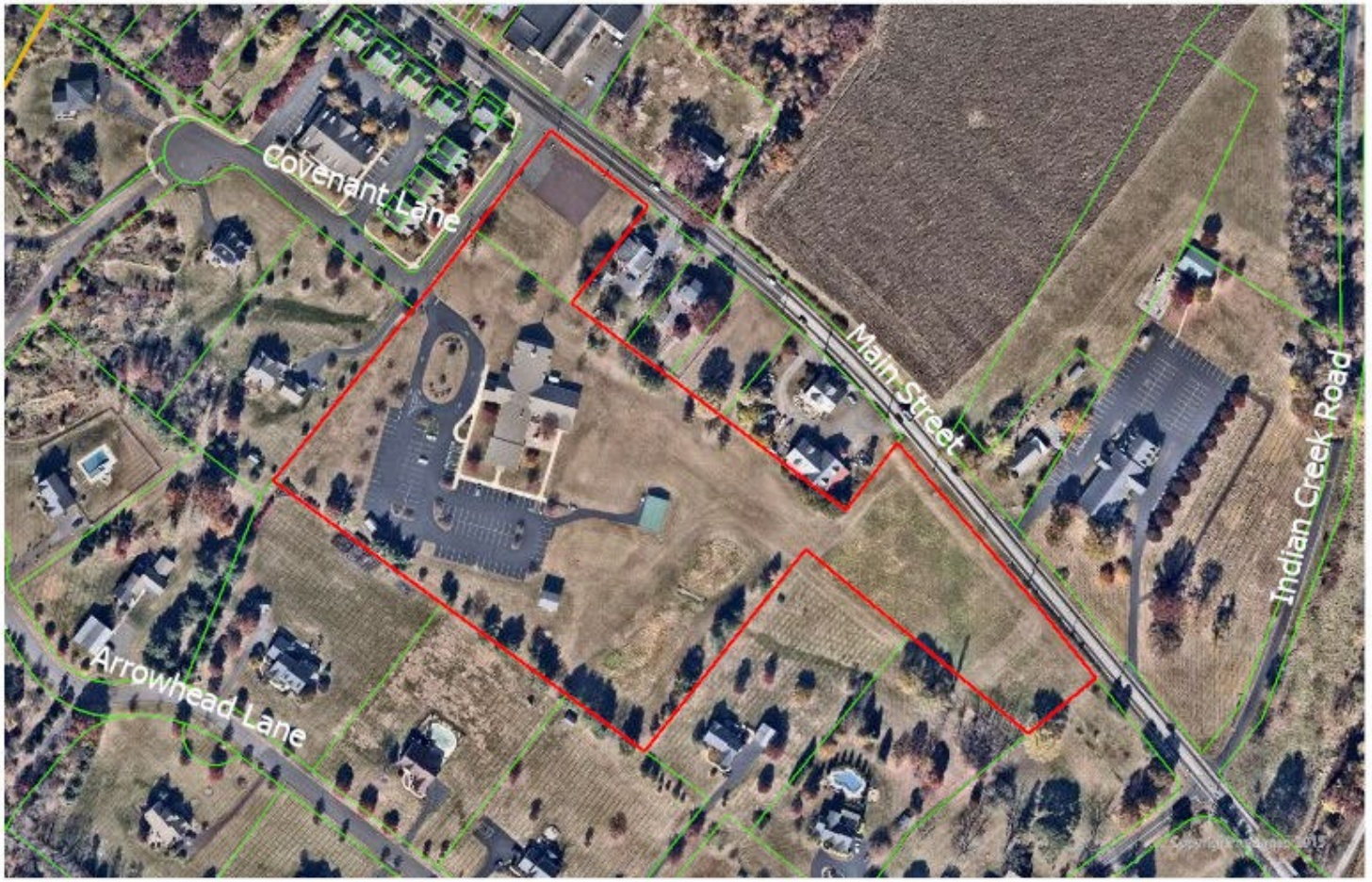
Sincerely,

Claire Warner, Senior Community Planner
Claire.Warner@montgomerycountypa.gov – 610-278-3755

c: Covenant Presbyterian Church of Harleysville, Applicant
Susan Rice, STA Engineering, Inc., Applicant's Representative
Manus McHugh, Chair, Township Planning Commission
Michael Beuke, Director of Building and Zoning
Andrew Freimuth, Township Solicitor
Michele Fountain, P.E., Township Engineer
John Evarts, P.E., Township Engineer
Keith Bergman, Chair, Township Board of Supervisors
Patti Reimel, Codes Administrative Assistant
Holly Hosterman, Assistant to the Township Manager
Stephanie Butler, P.E., Township Traffic Engineer

Attachment A: Aerial Image of Site
Attachment B: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan

ATTACHMENTS A & B

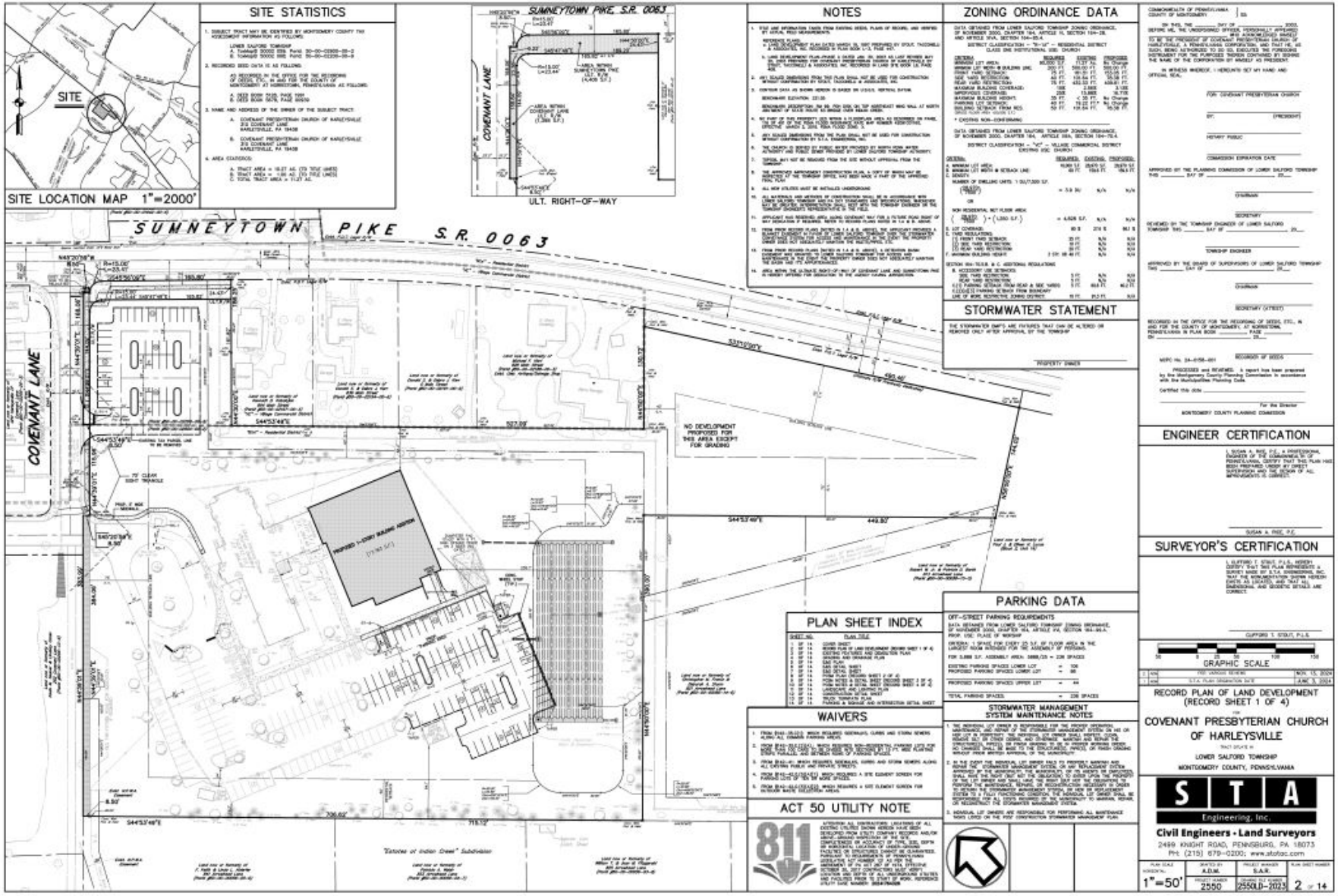


Covenant Presbyterian Church
MCPC#240158002

Montgomery County Planning Commission
Montgomery County Courthouse - Planning Commission
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(p) 610 278-3722 (f) 610 278-3941
www.montcopa.org/planning
Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

0 100 200 400 Feet

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SITE LOCATION MAP 1"=2000'
SITE STATISTICS
SUMNEYTOWN PIKE S.R. 0063
COVENANT LANE
ULT. RIGHT-OF-WAY
NOTES
ZONING ORDINANCE DATA
STORMWATER STATEMENT
ENGINEER CERTIFICATION
SURVEYOR'S CERTIFICATION
NO DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED FOR THIS AREA EXCEPT FOR GRADING
PROPOSED 1-STORY RAISING ADDITION
PLAN SHEET INDEX
PARKING DATA
WAIVERS
STORMWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM MAINTENANCE NOTES
ACT 50 UTILITY NOTE
GRAPHIC SCALE
RECORD PLAN OF LAND DEVELOPMENT (RECORD SHEET 1 OF 4)
COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HARLEYSVILLE
LOWER SALFORD TOWNSHIP
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
S T A Engineering, Inc.
Civil Engineers - Land Surveyors
2499 KNIGHT ROAD, PENNSBURG, PA 18073
PH: (215) 679-0200; www.stotac.com
1"=50'
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