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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION

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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 20, 2025

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

Re: MCPC # 24-0158-003
Plan Name: Covenant Presbyterian Church
(2 lots comprising 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 in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on February 14, 2025. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

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

The property currently contains a 1-story church building and a parking lot with 106 parking spaces. The proposed expansion would add 130 parking spaces, 86 of which would be added to the existing lot and 44 would be located in the additional lot on Main Street, for a total of 236 parking spaces. The property currently has a length of frontage along Main Street in the Village Commercial District, separated from the parking area by four residential properties. This portion of the property would remain undeveloped.

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 walkway connecting 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 previously submitted proposals for this site in letters dated August 2, 2024 and December 3, 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. 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 Shade Trees. We wish to reiterate that we recommend planting additional trees around the perimeter of the expanded parking lot to add shade and soften the appearance of the large parking lot. We suggest 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.

B. Parking Lot Landscape Islands. The number of parking lot landscape islands meet the subdivision and land development ordinance requirements regarding the maximum number of vehicle parking spaces in one row (a maximum of 15 is permitted, per § 142-35.E.(2)). Based on our interpretation, however, the proposed landscaping does not meet the standards of the SALDO which states 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)).

1. We recommend planting more shrubs in the parking lot landscape islands. We feel that the proposed number of shrubs per island could be increased to provide both environmental and aesthetic contributions. Specifically, we recommend planning more Ilex glabra (Inkberry) and Viburnum (Arrowwood).

2. We recommend not planting Red Barberry (Berberis thunbergii atropurpurea) in the parking lot landscape islands, as it is an invasive species. Berberis thunbergii atropurpurea is listed in the subdivision and land development ordinance planting list as a suitable shrub for planting in curbed parking area islands (SALDO Attachment 7-D.5). The township may want to update the planting list in the SALDO to remove invasive species.

PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

The applicant is requesting a deferral of the installation of curb, storm sewer and sidewalk along the Sumneytown Pike frontage on the R-1A zoned parcel. We reiterate that 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 suggest that the applicant and the township consider the importance of sidewalks in Vernfield and how they would contribute to the pedestrian network as it develops in the future.

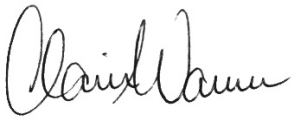
CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve the 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 (24-0158-003) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

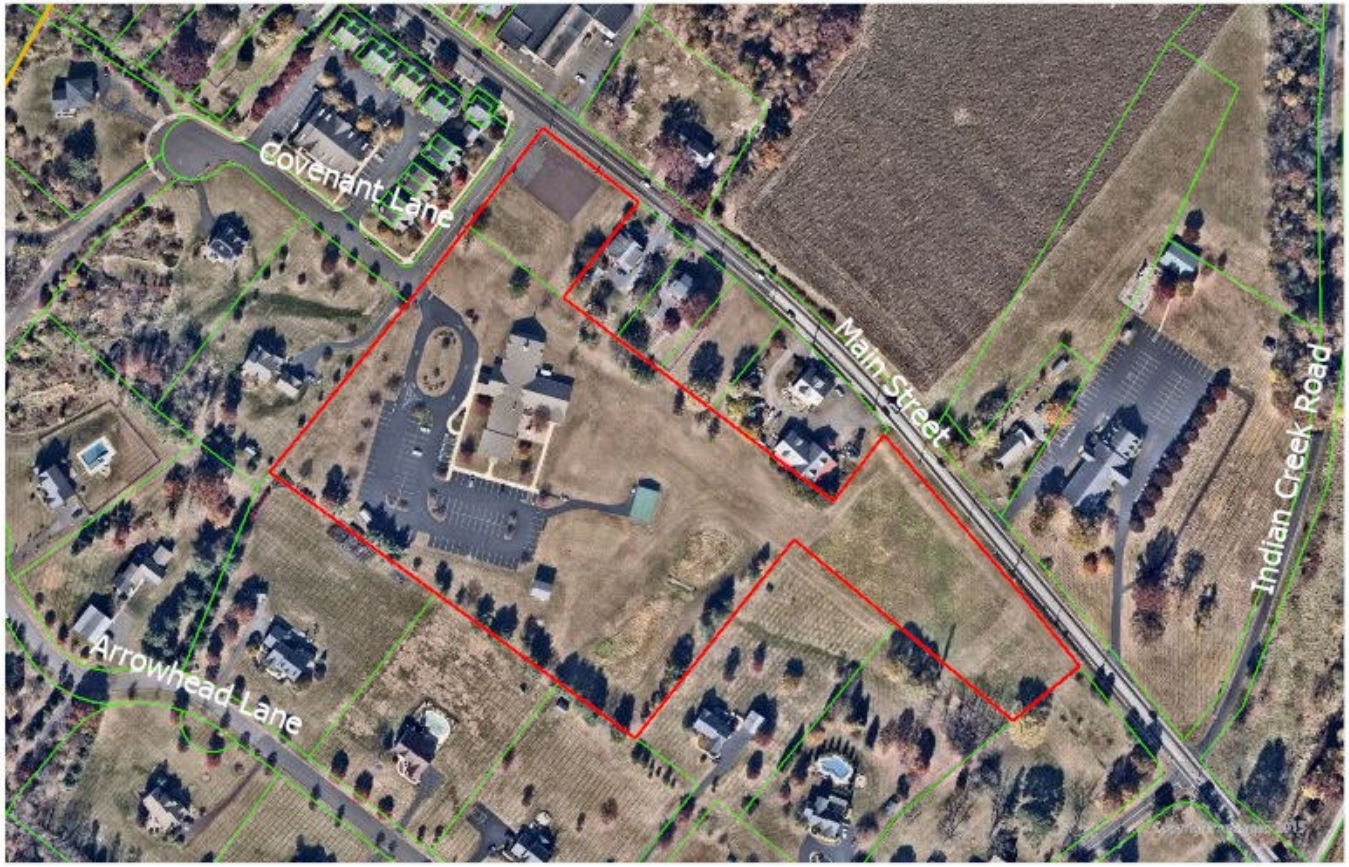


Claire Warner, Senior Community Planner
Claire.Warner@montgomerycountypa.gov – 610-278-3755

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
Stephanie Butler, P.E., Township Traffic Engineer
Keith Bergman, Chair, Township Board of Supervisors
Patti Reimel, Codes Administrative Assistant
Holly Hosterman, Assistant to the Township Manager

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

ATTACHMENTS A, B



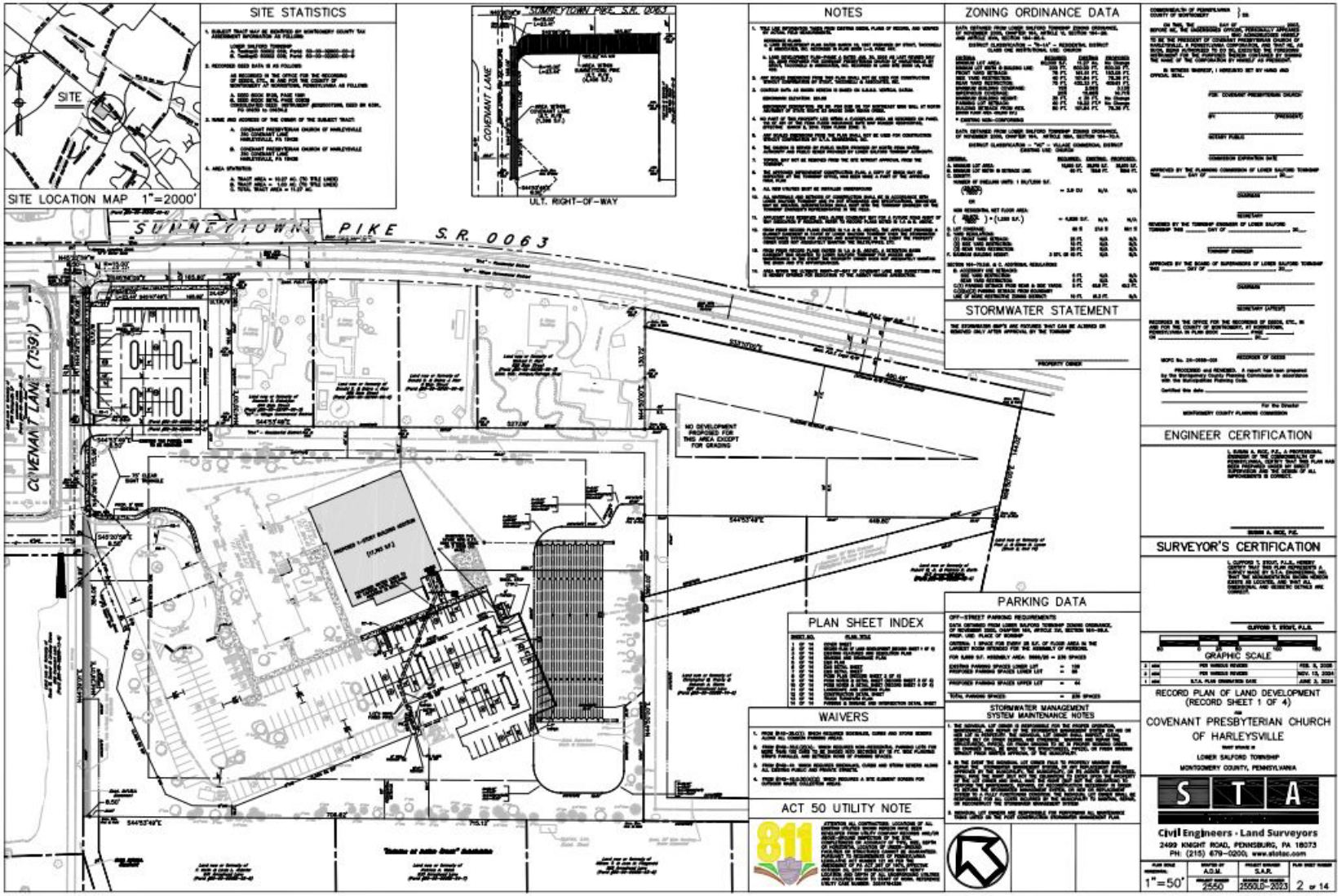
Covenant Presbyterian Church
MCPC#230158003

Montgomery County Planning Commission

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Montgomery County Courthouse - Planning Commission
PO Box 311 Norristown PA 19404-0311
(p) 610 278-3722 (f) 610 278-3941
www.montcopa.org/planning
Aerial photography provided by Nearmap


SITE
SITE LOCATION MAP 1"=2000'
SITE STATISTICS
SUMNEYTOWN PIKE, S.R. 0063
ULT. RIGHT-OF-WAY
COVENANT LANE
SUMNEYTOWN PIKE S.R. 0063
COVENANT LANE (759')
NO DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED FOR THIS AREA EXCEPT FOR GRADING
NOTES
ZONING ORDINANCE DATA
STORMWATER STATEMENT
PROPERTY OWNER
ENGINEER CERTIFICATION
SURVEYOR'S CERTIFICATION
PLAN SHEET INDEX
PARKING DATA
WAIVERS
STORMWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM MAINTENANCE NOTES
ACT 50 UTILITY NOTE
811
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
Civil Engineers - Land Surveyors
2499 KNIGHT ROAD, FEASTERVILLE, PA 19053
PH: (215) 679-0200, www.stalac.com
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2550LD-2023
2 of 14