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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

August 2, 2024

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

Re: MCPC #24-0158-001
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 July 17, 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.

The property currently contains a 1-story existing church building and a parking lot with 106 parking spaces. The proposed parking lot expansion would provide 71 parking spaces. The abutting parcel currently contains 21 parking spaces and is proposed to be developed with a 59-space parking lot that would be "held in reserve until such time that the additional parking becomes necessary." A five-foot-wide sidewalk is proposed to connect the proposed parking lot (on the smaller parcel) to the entrance of the church building. In addition, a sidewalk is proposed to extend from the existing sidewalk and connect the proposed building addition to the parking lot expansion.

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.

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

SIDEWALKS

The applicant is proposing a sidewalk along Covenant Lane to connect the proposed expanded parking lot to the church building entrance, which we commend. However, there is no sidewalk proposed along Main Street, which is the central corridor through the Village of Vernfield. We encourage the applicant to extend the sidewalk along the entire Covenant Lane frontage as well as along Main Street.

The township's subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) 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 consider the importance of sidewalks in Vernfield and how they encourage people to walk to local destinations.

LANDSCAPING

A. Street Trees. The proposed parking lot (in reserve) would be built up to the street (Main Street), providing little room for street trees or a sidewalk. Street trees are required along existing streets and "Along major walkways through parking lots and between nonresidential buildings" (§ 142-42.E(1)). We recommend shifting the parking lot south on the lot to create more space for the sidewalk and street trees, which would be feasible with the lot consolidation.

    1. *Trees along Sidewalk.* The applicant is proposing a walkway between the future parking lot expansion and the church building entrance. We recommend that street trees be planted to provide shade along the walkway.

    2. *Plan Notes*. The landscaping plan shows three existing maples between the parking lot and Main Street, but the trees do not appear in the aerial imagery.

B. Parking Lot Landscaping. There are few trees proposed to be planted in parking lot islands and around the parking lot. The number of parking lot landscape islands meet the SALDO requirements regarding the maximum number of vehicle parking spaces in one row (a maximum of 20 is permitted, per § 142-35.D.(3)). We recommend planting additional trees around the perimeter of the parking lot to add shade and soften the appearance of the large parking lot.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The existing stormwater management detention basin would be removed and new stormwater management system would be installed. Underground facilities need an inspection and maintenance plan to ensure that they continue to operate as intended.

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 (24-0158-001) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

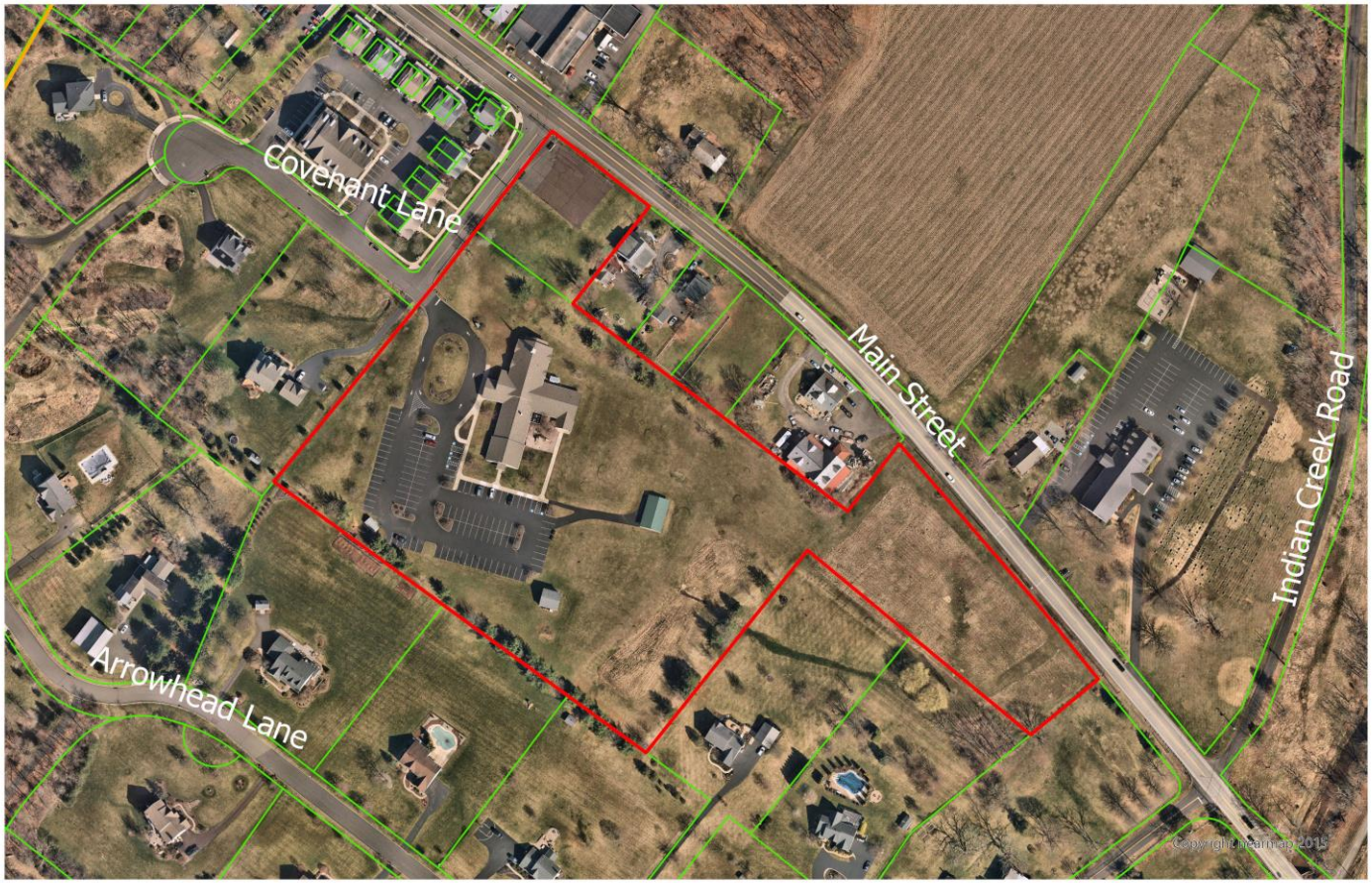
Claire Warner, Senior Community Planner
Claire.Warner@montgomerycountypa.gov – 610-278-3755

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
Michelle 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

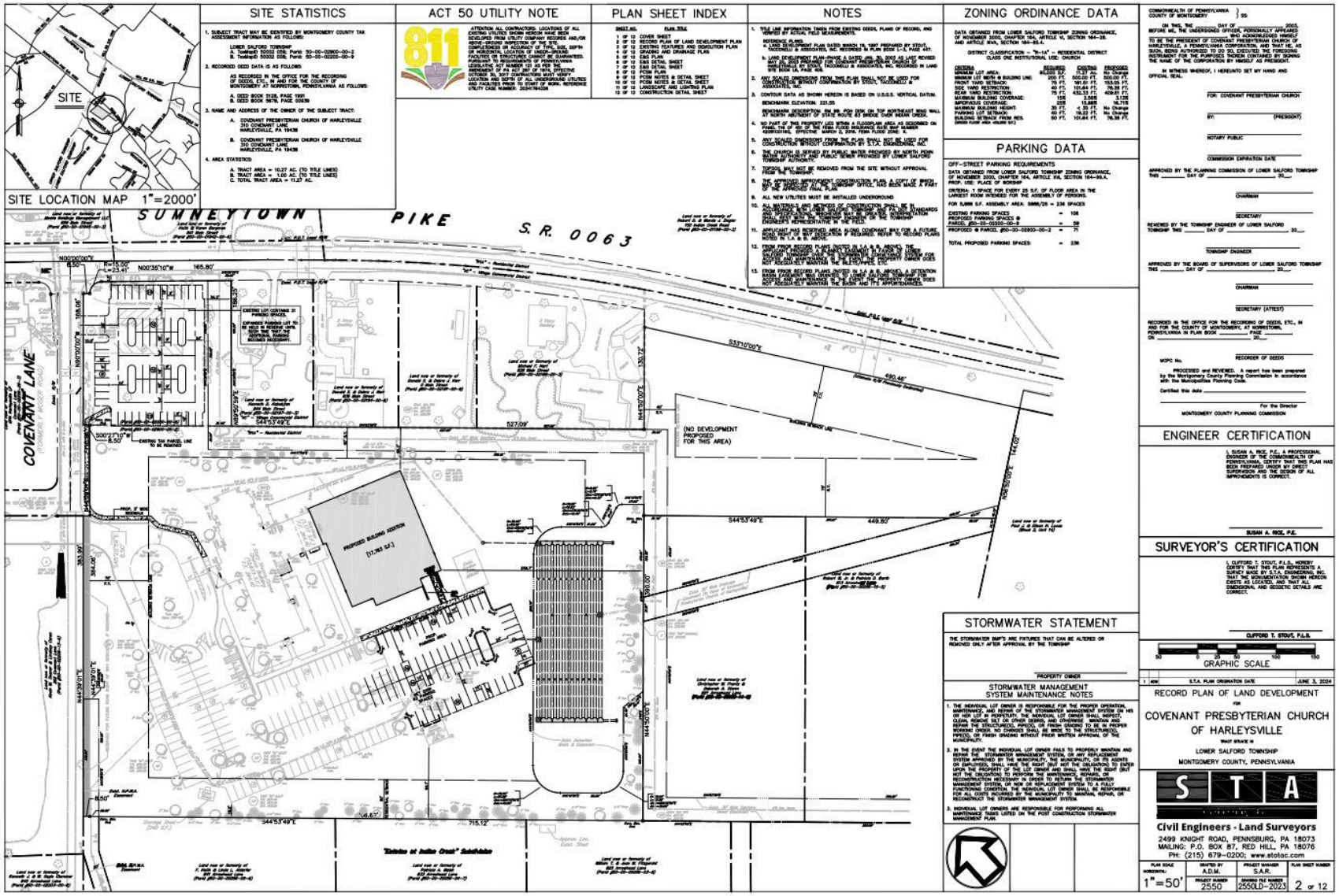


Covenant Presbyterian Church
MCPC#240158001

Montgomery County Planning Commission
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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

0 100 200 400 Feet

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SITE
SITE LOCATION MAP 1"=2000'
SITE STATISTICS
ACT 50 UTILITY NOTE
PLAN SHEET INDEX
NOTES
ZONING ORDINANCE DATA
PARKING DATA
STORMWATER STATEMENT
STORMWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM MAINTENANCE NOTES
ENGINEER CERTIFICATION
SURVEYOR'S CERTIFICATION
GRAPHIC SCALE
SUMNEYTOWN PIKE S.R. 0063
COVENANT LANE
(NO DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED FOR THIS AREA)
PROPOSED BUILDING ADDITION
11,762 S.F.
RECORD PLAN OF LAND DEVELOPMENT
FOR
COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HARLEYSVILLE
LOWER SALFORD TOWNSHIP
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Civil Engineers - Land Surveyors
2499 KNIGHT ROAD, PENNSBURG, PA 18073
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