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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 20, 2025

Henry Sekawungu, Director of Planning and Zoning
Cheltenham Township
8230 Old York Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027

Re: MCPC #25-0046-001
Plan Name: Glenside Elementary School Building Additions
1 lots comprising 10.06 acres
Situate: 400 Harrison Avenue at Limekiln Pike (SR 0152)
Cheltenham Township

Dear Mr. Sekawungu:

We have reviewed the above-referenced land development in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on February 26, 2025. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Cheltenham School District, proposes to incorporate three building additions onto Glenside Elementary School. They also propose to remove nine parking spaces from the west side of the building and add nine parking spaces to the bus loop to the northeast of the building. The improvements also include the relocation of a play area to the southwest of the building, the relocation of an emergency access drive, and work on three subsurface stormwater detention/infiltration beds.

The school is located in the R-2 Residential Zoning District and is a non-conforming use. The building additions will add 7,573 square feet to a 54,388 square foot building, an expansion of approximately 14% of the building area. The entire site is approximately 10 acres (parcel ID# 31-00-1738000-4).

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant‘s proposal, however, in the course of our review we have identified a number of key issues that we believe should be resolved prior to final plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

CIRCULATION

A. Parking Spaces in the Bus Loop. For safety, we recommend the School District ensure that there is a well-communicated plan to ensure that any users of the new parking spaces within the bus loop will not be entering or exiting the loop at the same time as the school buses.
B. Intersection of Limekiln Pike and Harrison Avenue. We note that the crosswalks at this intersection would be safer and more effective if they were improved to a highly visible crosswalk style, such as a continental crosswalk. We suggest the applicant consider repainting these crosswalks at the time of construction of this project.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

A. Sustainable Development Principles. Glenside Elementary School's partnership with the Tookany-Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership (TTF) has resulted in an attractive and well-maintained riparian buffer along the Tookany Creek at the south edge of the school property. We hope that the school will take that ethos of conservation and stewardship into this project as well.
B. Location of Infiltration Bed. We recommend that the new infiltration bed underneath the bus loop be adjusted in size and shape to be located completely under the new parking spaces. This will make landscaping in the remainder of that island easier.
C. Surface Stormwater Management. For education purposes, it might be valuable to include a rain garden or other surface stormwater management infrastructure, perhaps on the southwest side of the school. Green stormwater infrastructure could be an opportunity for the students and teachers to see and participate in maintaining stormwater management infrastructure. A rain garden could help educate students about environmental stewardship.

LANDSCAPING AND OUTDOOR SPACE

A. Bus Loop Parking Area. There is an opportunity to add plants and trees to the island where nine parking spaces are proposed to be added. We recommend adding a tree at each end of the new parking area. Choosing a species such as scarlet oak that will grow tall and can be trimmed such that all limbs are above the height of a school bus will provide shade for the paved area and parked or waiting vehicles. It appears that planning in this area is required by the township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance: §260-50.F.
B. Slope toward Limekiln Pike. We note that a 33% grade is proposed between the school building and Limekiln Pike. This steep of a slops is challenging due to the potential for erosion and the special equipment needed for mowing. We suggest considering either a native plant meadow or a terraced slope. A meadow would reduce erosion and only need to be mowed approximately twice per year. A terraced slope designed with a segmented block wall system will reduce erosion and could be an amenity that would expand the outdoor classroom and provide more play spaces for students. See Appendix C for photographs of other terraced slopes.

C. Outdoor Classroom. Glenside Elementary School has a small outdoor classroom located between the building and Limekiln Pike. While these proposed improvements are taking place, there might be an opportunity to improve the outdoor classroom at the same time.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve the Cheltenham Township's planning objectives for sustainable development. 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 (*#25-0046-001*) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

Chloe Mohr, AICP, Principal Planner
Chloe.Mohr@MontgomeryCountyPA.gov – (610) 278-3739

c: Chester Valley Engineers, Inc., Applicant's Representative
Alyson Elliott, Township Manager
Thomas Cross, Chair, Township Planning Commission
Roger A. Phillips, P.E., Township Engineer
Edward Diasio, Township Solicitor
Adam Schantz, Community Planner, Montgomery County Planning Commission
Justin DiBerardinis, Executive Director, Tookany Tacony Frankford Watershed Partnership
Scott Burton, PennDOT
Paul Lutz, PennDOT
Fran Hanney, PennDOT
Jessica Buck, District Manager, Montgomery County Conservation District

Attachment A: Aerial Image of Site
Attachment B: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan
Attachment C: Examples of Terraced Slopes

ATTACHMENT A: AERIAL IMAGE OF SITE



Glenside Elementary School
Building Additions
MCPC#250046001

Montgomery County Planning Commission

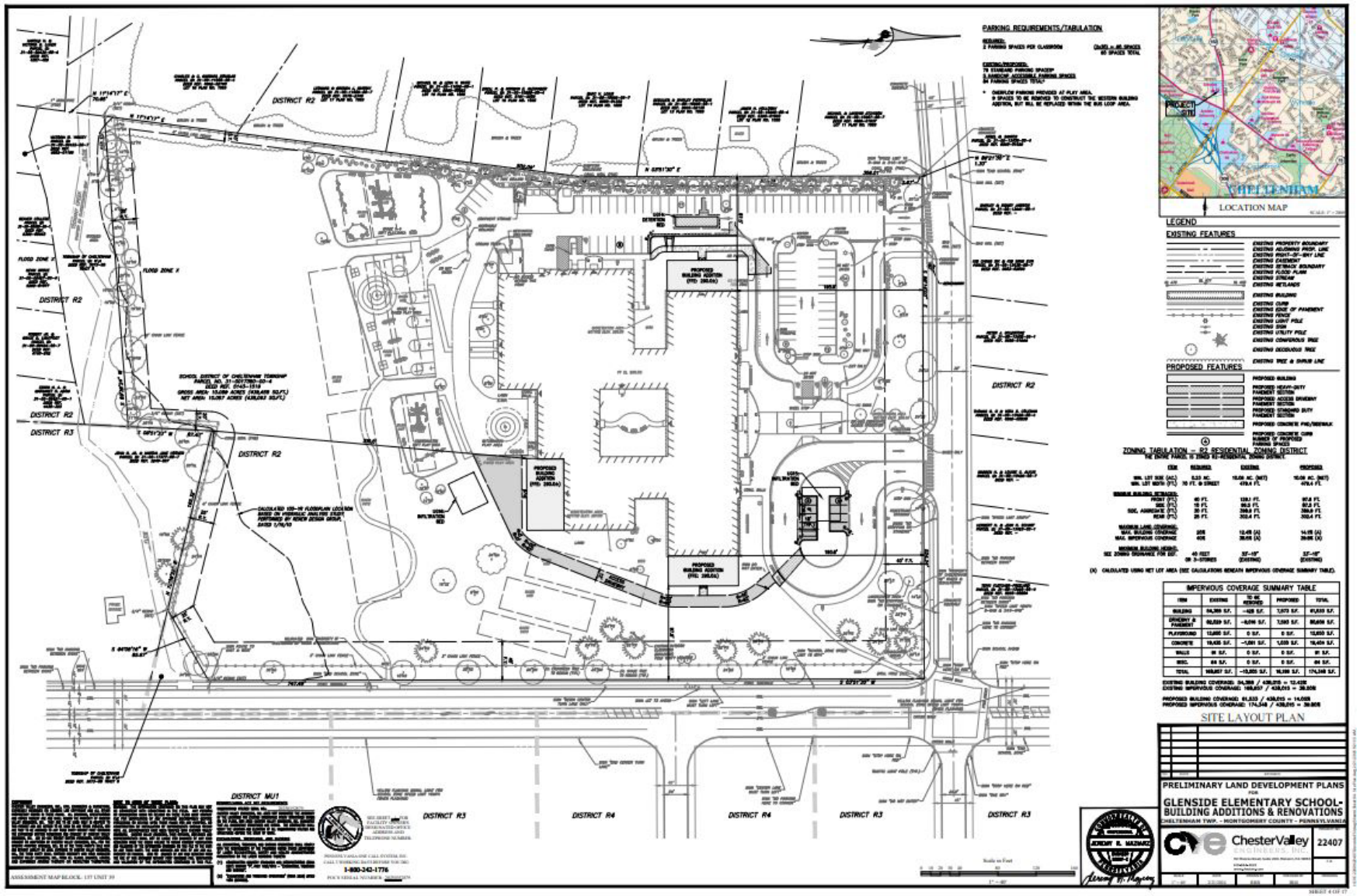
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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

ATTACHMENT B: REDUCED COPY OF APPLICANT'S SITE PLAN



ATTACHMENT C: EXAMPLES OF TERRACED SLOPES



