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Scott France, AICP
Executive Director

May 12, 2026

Ms. Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Development
Municipality of Norristown
235 East Airy Street
Norristown, Pennsylvania 19401-5048

Re: MCPC #26-0103-001
Proposal Name: Hancock Elementary School Modular Expansion
(1 lot comprising 6.95 acres)
Parcel ID: 13-00-29532-00-2
Situate: 1520 Arch Street/East Freedley Street
Municipality of Norristown

Dear Ms. Musonye:

We have reviewed the above-referenced subdivision/land development in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on April 14, 2026. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Norristown Area School District, is requesting preliminary/final review for a 12,810-square-foot modular addition to the Hancock Elementary School, which is located within the municipality's R-2 Residential District and the Floodplain Conservation District. With the addition, the school's footprint will be 51,139 square feet. In addition to the building structure, the expansion project includes construction of a new underground stormwater infiltration system and four parking spaces. Part of the building and associated grading are located within the regulatory floodplain and floodway defined on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) flood maps.

As identified on plan sheet 1, three variances are being requested: 1) to increase the allowable amount of impervious surface coverage permitted in the R-2 Residential District; 2) to permit new construction within the Floodplain Conservation District; and 3) to extend the school use.

RECOMMENDATION

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

REVIEW COMMENTS

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED IN FLOODPLAIN CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The floodplain boundary designations of Zone AE and Zone AE with Floodway, as shown on FEMA’s map included as Attachment D, resulted from a detailed engineering study that used existing hydrologic and hydraulic data to identify these floodplain area boundaries. The identification of the federally approved regulatory floodplain and the description of flood zones and special requirements for each zone are included as part of the zoning ordinance’s floodplain regulations in Section 320-333.A and Section 320-333.B.1 and B.2, respectively.

Plan sheet 4, included as Attachment C, shows a red line delineating the floodplain boundary as surveyed by the applicant’s engineer at an elevation of 142 feet. The 142-foot elevation line shown on FEMA’s map correlates to a cross section that defines the flood elevation at that exact location. Areas upstream of this cross-section will be a higher elevation.

If the line proposed on the plan is to be accepted as the new floodplain boundary, we strongly recommend that the municipality requires the applicant to obtain a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) from FEMA in accordance with Section 320-333.C. Failure to comply with the federal regulations may endanger future flood insurance coverage eligibility.

In order to protect the public health, safety, and welfare, we recommend that, if a variance is granted, the municipality requires the applicant to comply with all provisions of Section 320-336, Technical Provisions in the Event of a Variance Being Granted. Doing so will ensure that the school’s expansion complies with the municipal and federal requirements for floodplain development. These provisions include an engineering analysis to determine if a LOMR would need to be obtained from FEMA and elevating or floodproofing the modular structure in accordance with Section 320-336.B.2., Elevation and Floodproofing Requirements for Non-residential Structures.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

An underground infiltration system is proposed for mitigating the stormwater runoff that will be generated from the additional impervious area created by adding the modular structure.

It appears that there is enough space to incorporate an above-ground vegetated basin designed to infiltrate captured runoff in place of an underground system. These basins, commonly known as rain gardens, are an effective stormwater best management practice that can also double as an educational tool. Planting native species in the basin and adding signage at the site presents an opportunity for students to learn about the water cycle and other environmental topics. We recommend that the applicant incorporate a rain garden designed to accommodate the runoff generated from the increased impervious area as the stormwater best management practice for this site.

If the underground storage system is required due to existing soil conditions that prevent infiltration, we recommend that the municipality requires the applicant to provide an operations and maintenance plan that identifies a protocol for ensuring the system functions as intended. This plan is required under Section 276-30 of the municipality's Stormwater Management ordinance. Additionally, we suggest that the location of the underground system and its access are identified by flags or other markers to avoid damage to the system by construction equipment or other equipment or vehicles in the future.

LANDSCAPING

Eleven trees are identified for removal to accommodate the modular expansion. Aerial imagery indicates that these trees are small and may have been planted within the past year or two. We ask the municipality to consider requiring the applicant to relocate and replant these trees to another suitable location on the property. Substituting these trees in place of new plantings would take advantage of their growth since being planted in terms of providing shade.

We encourage the close coordination between the municipality and the applicant to ensure that the plantings proposed for the buffer areas and the additional plantings adjacent to the proposed structure meet the tree replacement requirements identified in the Subdivision and Land Use Ordinance (SALDO) Sections 282-433 and 434.

LIGHTING

It does not appear that additional exterior lighting is proposed as part of the expansion project. We suggest the municipality consider requiring the applicant to provide exterior lighting in the vicinity of the modular facility to enhance safety for students, as well as staff who park in the lots behind the school. Any additional lighting fixtures, either attached to the modular facility or on poles, will be subject to the criteria in Section 320-253, Lighting Standards.

REVISIONS TO SITE ADDRESS AND PARCEL NUMBER REFERENCES

The Existing Lot Data table shown on plan sheets 2 through 4 references an incorrect address and parcel number for the school property. We recommend that this information is updated as a condition of final approval and that the numbers used in the calculation tables are verified to be correct prior to recording the plan.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal, but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Norristown's planning objectives for school facilities that are located within the Floodplain District.

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 #26-0103-001 on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

Donna Fabry, CFM, Principal Open Space Planner
donna.fabry@montgomerycountypa.gov – 610-278-3445

c: Jeffrey Cardwell, Chief Operations Officer, Norristown Area School District
Alvina Hamme, Chair, Municipal Planning Commission

Attachments: A. Site Aerial
B. Site Plan
C. Plan Sheet 4 – Grading and Utility Plan
D. FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map for Hancock Elementary School



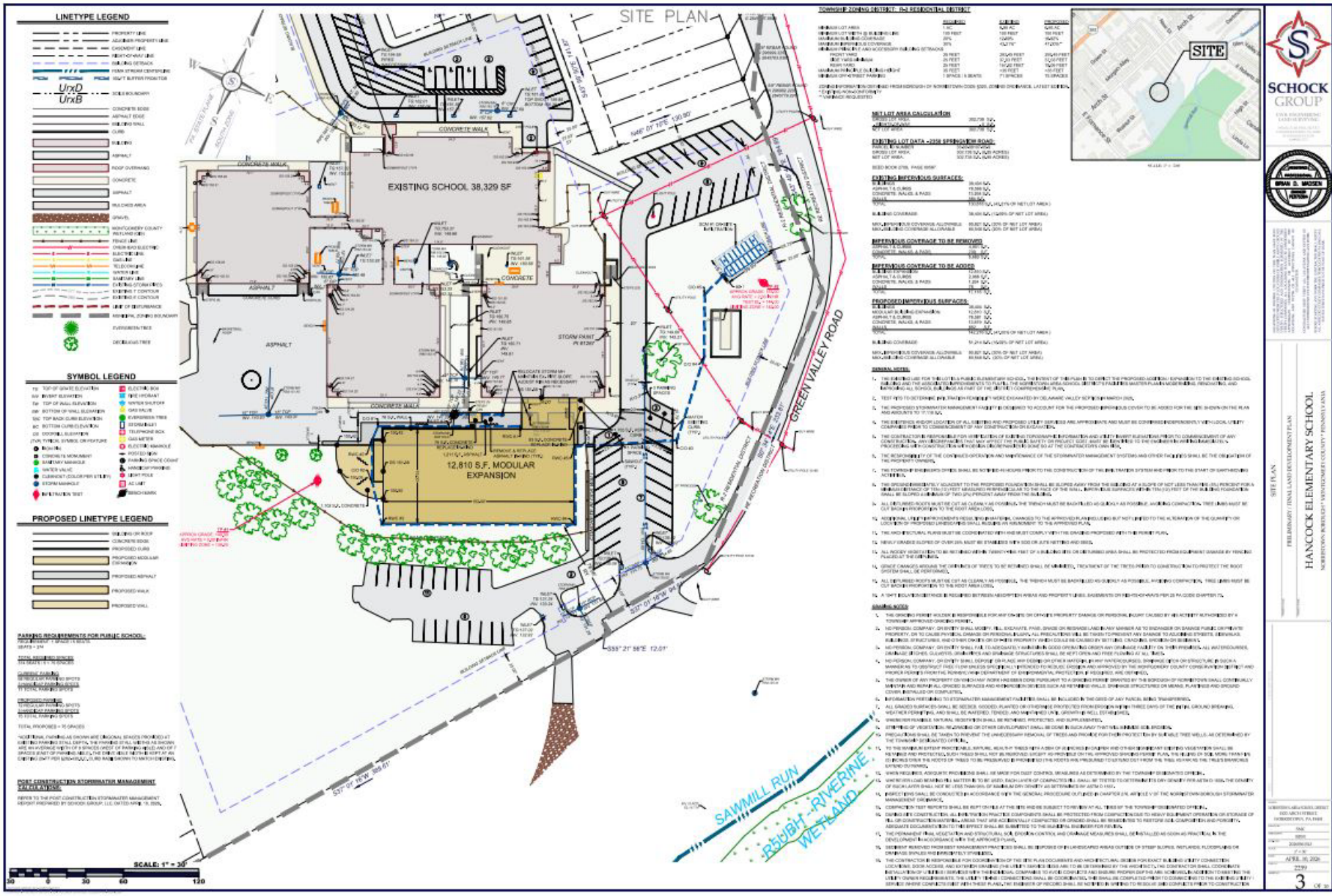
Hancock Elementary School
MCPC#260103001

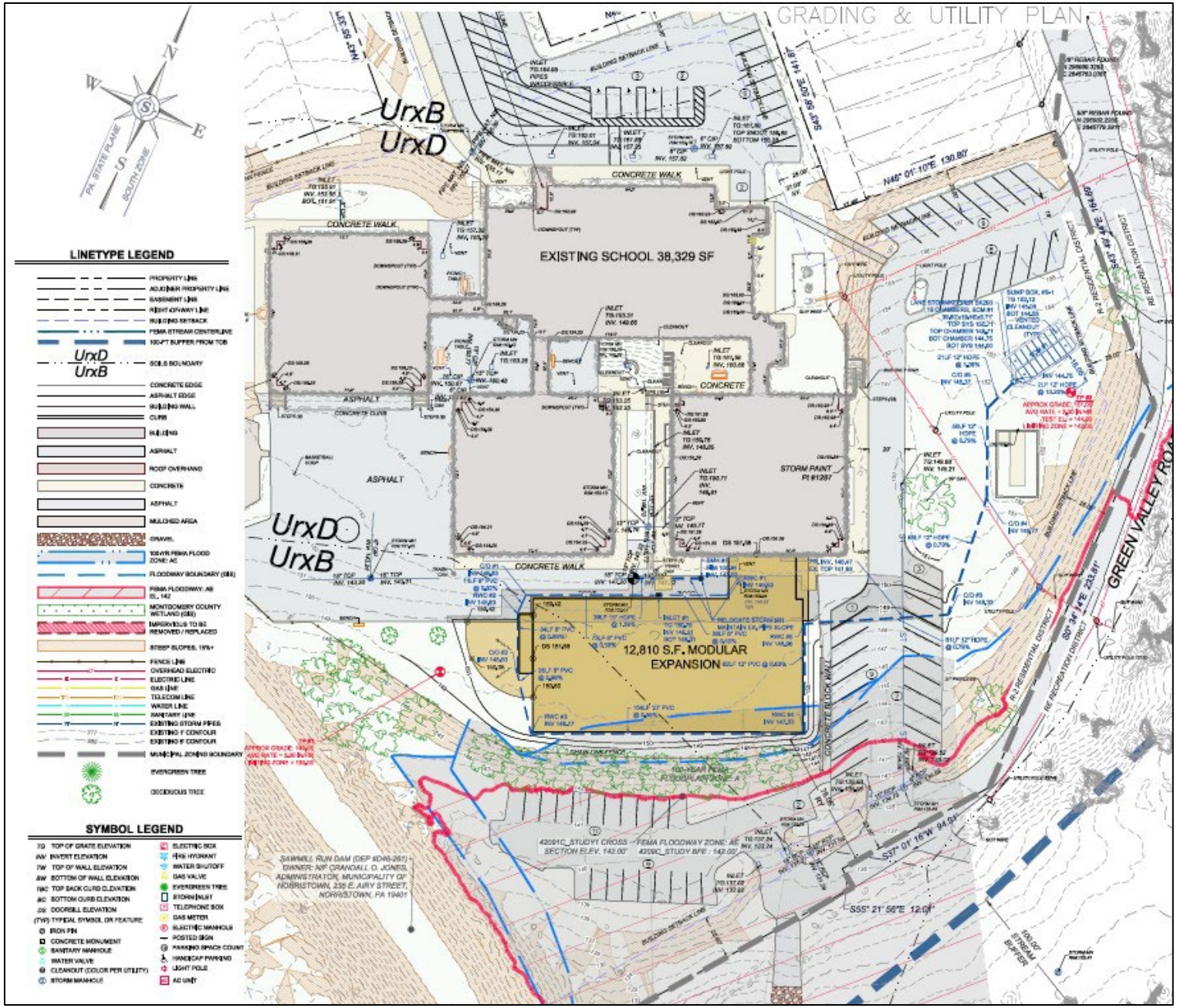
Montgomery County Planning Commission

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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap


SITE PLAN
LINETYPE LEGEND
SYMBOL LEGEND
PROPOSED LINETYPE LEGEND
EXISTING SCHOOL 38,329 SF
12,810 S.F. MODULAR EXPANSION
GREEN VALLEY ROAD
SAWMILL RUN
RIVERINE WETLAND
SCALE: 1" = 30'
SITE
SCHOCK GROUP
HANCOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PRELIMINARY / FINAL LAND DEVELOPMENT PLANS
SITE PLAN


GRADING & UTILITY PLAN
EXISTING SCHOOL 38,329 SF
12,810 S.F. MODULAR EXPANSION
UrxB
UrxD
CONCRETE WALK
ASPHALT
CONCRETE
STORM PAINT
GREEN VALLEY ROAD
LINETYPE LEGEND
SYMBOL LEGEND



PIN
Approximate location based on user input and does not represent an authoritative property location

MAP PANELS
Selected FloodMap Boundary
Digital Data Available
No Digital Data Available
Unmapped

OTHER AREAS
NO SCREEN Area of Minimal Flood Hazard Zone X
Effective LOMRs
Area of Undetermined Flood Hazard Zone D
Otherwise Protected Area
Coastal Barrier Resource System Area

SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS
Without Base Flood Elevation (BFE) Zone A, V, A99
With BFE or Depth
Regulatory Floodway Zone AE, AO, AH, VE, AR

OTHER AREAS OF FLOOD HAZARD
0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard, Areas of 1% annual chance flood with average depth less than one foot or with drainage areas of less than one square mile Zone X
Future Conditions 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard Zone X
Area with Reduced Flood Risk due to Levee. See Notes. Zone X
Area with Flood Risk due to Levee Zone D

OTHER FEATURES
20.2 / 17.5 Cross Sections with 1% Annual Chance Water Surface Elevation
Coastal Transect
Base Flood Elevation Line (BFE)
Limit of Study
Jurisdiction Boundary
Coastal Transect Baseline
Profile Baseline
Hydrographic Feature

GENERAL STRUCTURES
Channel, Culvert, or Storm Sewer
Levee, Dike, or Floodwall