

Prince George's County Departure from Design Standards Application No. 513

Applicant: Whosoever Will Christian Church, Owner

Location: North side of Sellman Road, west of Rhode Island Avenue

Request: Departure from Design Standards

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the applicant is requesting departure from design standards for a reduction of a two-way drive aisle; and

WHEREAS, the advertisement of the public hearing was posted on the property in accordance with the adopted Rules of Procedure of the Prince George's County Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, the Technical Staff Report released July 19, 2000, recommends APPROVAL, with conditions; and

WHEREAS, after consideration of the Technical Staff Report and testimony at its regular meeting on July 27, 2000, the Prince George's County Planning Board agreed with the staff recommendation; and

WHEREAS, the Prince George's County Planning Board decision is based on the findings and conclusions found in the Technical Staff Report and the following DETERMINATIONS:

1. The subject property is a 1.7-acre rectangularly-shaped lot on the north side of Sellman Road. It is improved with a single-family residence, a storage shed, an accessory office structure and a barn. All the structures are located on the rear portion of the property. The entire front portion of the property consists of lawn that gradually slopes down toward Sellman Road. The difference in grade between Sellman Road and the rear property line is approximately 30 feet. Therefore, the existing structures are located approximately 30 feet higher than the road level along Sellman Road and are hardly visible from the street. Access to the property is through an existing gravel driveway. At the end of the driveway is a roundabout that provides access to the existing structures and the proposed parking.

The existing residence, located on the east side of the property, will be converted to a parsonage. The existing barn, on the west side of the property, will be converted to a church with 50 seats. The accessory structure located in between the residence and the barn will be converted to an office. The storage shed along the rear property line will be retained as a storage shed. Fifteen gravel parking spaces are proposed around the roundabout. The existing driveway is being widened on the east and west sides of the roundabout. There is a five-foot-high wood fence along the rear portion of the west property line, a four-foot-high chain-link fence along the north property line and an iron pipe fence along the rear portion of the east property line.

The adjacent uses are as follows:

North - Single-Family detached residences in the R-R Zone
South - Sellman Road
East - Single family detached dwelling in the R-80 Zone
West - Single-Family detached residences in the R-R Zone

2. Section 27-560, Interior Driveway Widths, of the Zoning Ordinance requires a 22-foot-wide driveway for two-way traffic and an 11-foot-wide driveway for one-way traffic. The applicant proposes to use the existing ten-foot-wide driveway instead of providing a 22-foot-wide driveway. Since there is only one church service on Sundays, only a small number of vehicles will utilize the parking lot at one time, and because church services will not be scheduled one after the other, the church is requesting a reduction in the width of the drive to the existing ten feet. The chance of more than one vehicle attempting to use the driveway at the same time is negligible. The driveway width is increased to 22 feet in the roundabout area where the parking spaces around it will create the two-way traffic.

A Departure from Design Standards 513 is requested for the ten-foot-wide driveway.

3. Section 27-239.01 (b)(9)(A) of the Zoning Ordinance, Required Findings, states that:

(i) *The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal;*

As the Church will hold only one service each Sunday, all vehicles will come and go from the site at the same time, going in the same direction, thus greatly reducing the potential for conflict. The Departure will allow existing residential driveways to remain as is, minimizing any changes to the site. Therefore, granting of the Departure will not impair the health, safety, morals, comfort, convenience, or welfare of the inhabitants of the County, and the purposes of the subtitle will be equally well served by the proposed driveway.

(ii) *The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request;*

The Departure request is to utilize the existing driveway, which is of sufficient width to accommodate one-way traffic, for access to the church parking lot, while retaining the residential character of the property. The Fire Department has requested a ten-foot-wide lane of grass pavers on the eastern side of the property adjacent to the existing driveway. A condition of approval has been added to require the same. With the recommended conditions of approval, the departure will be the minimum necessary given the residential character of the site.

- (iii) *The departure is the minimum necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site or prevalent in areas of the County developed prior to November 29, 1949;*

The Departure is necessary to retain the residential character of the property while establishing a church. Since the church is for a very small congregation of 30 people, the number of motorists coming into the church at a given time is very small. In addition, the motorists will not generally be coming to and going from the site simultaneously, but will be either coming or going at any one time. Therefore, the potential for conflict is reduced and a one-way driveway will be sufficient to serve the church congregation. The Departure will be the minimum necessary to alleviate circumstances that are unique to the site.

- (iv) *The departure will not impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.*

The Departure will help retain the visual, functional, and environmental quality and integrity of the site and the surrounding neighborhood by maintaining the residential character of the property. Since the maximum usage of the drive aisle will be to come into the site before the Sunday morning service or drive out of the site after the Sunday morning service, retaining the existing driveway will not be detrimental to the neighborhood. The traffic coming in and out of the subject property will not disrupt the neighborhood. The proposed parking spaces will not be visible from Sellman Road and only the existing driveway will be visible. Therefore, the proposal as a whole will not impair the visual quality of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.

Referral Comments

4. The Community Planning Division (Fisher to Srinivas, May 12, 2000) has no comments regarding the Departure from Design Standards.
5. The Transportation Planning Section (Masog to Srinivas, May 30, 2000) has stated that the width of the driveway will have safety problems because it is more than 300 feet in length. Other churches on smaller sites have complied with the minimum width of 22 feet for the driveways. There are no site constraints to providing a 22-foot-wide driveway. The Section states that if the length of the driveway were smaller, the safety problems because of the ten-foot-width would have been reduced. The ten-foot-wide lane of grass pavers requested by the Fire Department on the east side of the existing driveway will substantially eliminate the safety concerns of the Transportation Planning Section.
6. The Department of Public Works and Transportation (Hijazi to Stouten, May 23, 2000) has stated that right-of-way dedication and roadway improvements along the frontage of Sellman Road are required in accordance with DPW&T Standard No. 12.

7. The Fire Prevention and Investigation Division of the Fire Department (Oladeinde to Williams, May 24, 2000) has required a ten-foot-wide grass paver along the eastern side of the existing driveway. A 15-foot-wide gate is also required at the entrance. A condition of approval has been added to require the same.
8. The Growth Policy and Public Facilities Planning Section (Williams to Stouten, May 25, 2000) has recommended compliance with the Fire Department=s recommendations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Departure from DDS-513 is hereby approved subject to the following condition:

1. Prior to certification of the site plan for DDS 513, the site/grading and landscape plans shall be revised to show a ten-foot-wide lane of grass pavers with 95% compaction of subsoil along the eastern side of the existing driveway for the entire length of the driveway if ultimately required by the Fire Department.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appeal of the Planning Board=s action must be filed with the District Council of Prince George=s County within thirty (30) days following the final notice of the Planning Board=s decision.

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This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the motion of Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Lowe, with Commissioners Lowe, Eley, Brown, and Hewlett voting in favor of the motion, at its regular meeting held on Thursday, July 27, 2000, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 7th day of September 2000.

Trudye Morgan Johnson
Executive Director

By Frances J. Guertin
Planning Board Administrator

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