



*Note: Staff reports can be accessed at [www.mncppc.org/pgco/planning/plan.htm](http://www.mncppc.org/pgco/planning/plan.htm).*

## SPECIAL EXCEPTION

## SE-4538

Application	General Data
<b>Project Name:</b> Camp Aquasco  <b>Location:</b> North side of Aquasco Farm Road, approximately 1.1 miles east of Aquasco Road.  <b>Applicant/Address:</b> Mr. William Ensor 34942 Charles Town Pike Purcellville, Virginia 20132	Date Accepted: 7/22/2005
	Planning Board Action Limit: NA
	Plan Acreage: 5 acres
	Zone: O-S
	Dwelling Units: NA
	Square Footage: 4,464.0
	Planning Area: 87A
	Tier: Rural
	Council District: 9
	Municipality: NA
	200-Scale Base Map: 225SE15

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Eleemosynary or philanthropic institution	Adjoining Property Owners Previous Parties of Record Registered Associations: 4/25/2005 (CB-12-2003)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site and Notice of Hearing Mailed: N/A

Staff Recommendation		Staff Reviewer: Reggie Baxter	
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X		

March 1, 2006

**TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT:**

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board  
The Prince George's County District Council

VIA: Jimi Jones, Acting Zoning Supervisor

FROM: Reggie Baxter, Planning Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Special Exception Application No. 4538**

REQUEST: **Eleemosynary or Philanthropic Institution**

RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVAL; with conditions**

---

NOTE:

This application is on the agenda for the Planning Board to decide whether or not to schedule a public hearing. If the Planning Board decides to hear the application, it will be placed on a future agenda.

Any person may request the Planning Board to schedule a public hearing. The request may be made in writing prior to the agenda date or in person on the agenda date. All requests must specify the reasons for the public hearing. All parties will be notified of the Planning Board's decision.

You are encouraged to become a person of record in this application. The request must be made in writing and sent to the Office of the Zoning Hearing Examiner at the address indicated above. Questions about becoming a person of record should be directed to the Hearing Examiner at 301-952-3644. All other questions should be directed to the Development Review Division at 301-952-3530.

---

## FINDINGS:

- A. **Location and Field Inspection:** The subject property is an undeveloped and wooded five-acre parcel located along the north side of Aquasco Farm Road, approximately 1.1 miles east of Aquasco Road (MD 381). A 150-foot-wide Southern Maryland Energy Cooperative (SMECO) easement for high-power transmission lines bisects the property in a west to east direction.

The subject property is part of a larger 85.5-acre parcel (Parcel 73) owned by the applicant (Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital). Elsewhere on this 85 acres is another five-acre special exception (SE-4147/1) for an eleemosynary institution that is used by the applicant for a Girl Scout camp known as Camp Aquasco. The existing camp is improved with a 2,000-square-foot lodge for indoor assembly; one 384-square-foot outdoor camp unit (educational pavilion); a 336-square-foot cook shelter; a 56-square-foot bathroom; and four "glenshelters" (a covered pavilion with three-foot-high walls that provides a sleeping area for campers). The proposed Girl Scout camp that is subject to this application will be very similar in size and usage as the existing camp operating under SE-4147/01.

The overall property (Parcel 73) contains streams, areas of severe slopes, and areas of steep slopes with highly erodible soils. Soil series include Beltsville, Sandy land, Sassafras, and Westphalia soils. Some of these soils have limitations with respect to erodibility on steep slopes that could affect development. Marlboro clays are not found in the vicinity of this property. According to information obtained from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Program, no rare, threatened or endangered species are found in the vicinity. The property is located in the Black Swamp Creek watershed of the Patuxent River basin, the Rural Tier as reflected in the adopted General Plan, and the designated Patuxent Rural Legacy Area.

- B. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	O-S	O-S
Use(s)	Undeveloped	Eleemosynary Institution for camping and private recreation
Acreage	5.0	5.0
Parcels	Part of Parcel 73	Part of Parcel 73
Square Footage/GFA	0.0	4,464.0

Other Development Data: The proposed improvements on the subject property are:

One lodge (with deck)	2,880 square feet
One cook shelter	336 square feet
One bathroom	224 square feet
Four glenshelters	1,024 square feet (total)
TOTAL	4,464 square feet

- C. **History:** The subject property was retained in the O-S (Open Space) Zone upon adoption of the 1994 Sectional Map Amendment for the Subregion VI Study Area, along with the rest of Parcel 73. There has been no additional activity on the subject five acres.

We note that the existing Camp Aquasco, operated by the applicant elsewhere on the large Parcel 73 under SE-4197 for an eleemosynary or philanthropic institution, was approved on February 21, 1995, to allow the Girl Scouts to build and operate a campground. A site plan revision was approved on July 30, 1998, to allow a 464-square-foot addition to the camping lodge, to widen the access road, and to relocate the bathroom (SE-4197/1).

- D. **Master Plan Recommendation:** The 2002 General Plan places the property in the Rural Tier. The vision for this tier is to protect large amounts of woodland, wildlife habitat, recreation and agricultural pursuits, and provide for the preservation of rural character and vistas.

The 1993 Subregion VI Study Area Master Plan recommends “private open space” use for the subject property together with the balance of Parcel 73. Private open space is land that remains in private ownership and is often used for recreation or remains undeveloped. The plan identifies natural reserve areas on the entire subject property, indicating severe restraints to development or ecologically important systems. Such areas should be restricted from development except for agricultural, recreational and similar uses (Page 33). Surrounding rural lands in the community are shown for “low rural” land use to be implemented through the lowest-density residential zoning. Aquasco Road is shown as a local road with no planned transportation modifications.

- E. **Request:** The applicant, a nonprofit eleemosynary entity, proposes to develop the subject five-acre property as a campground for Girl Scouts. The proposed Girl Scout camp facility will primarily be used on weekends for overnight camping and will host a three-week summer day camp (no overnight use). Summer day camp attendees will use bus transportation provided by the applicant. The applicant indicates that the vast majority of remaining vehicle trips will be generated by the weekend camp activities on Friday evenings and Sunday mornings. A 22-foot-wide access driveway is proposed from Aquasco Farm Road.

Camping areas and facilities will be internal to the site and will include a lodge, cooking shelter, restroom, and four sleeping shelters, comprising a total of 4,464 square feet of floor area, together with a 4,500-square-foot parking area containing ten spaces. Approximately 3.2-acres will remain undisturbed woodland. The campground will be served by private well and septic systems that are shown on the site plan. Retention of woodlands will screen the facilities from Aquasco Farm Road and surrounding properties.

The applicant indicates the request is nearly identical in size and function to the existing five-acre Camp Aquasco Girl Scout camp and has been in operation for over ten years. The existing camp is located approximately 500 feet to the west of the subject property.

- F. **Neighborhood and Surrounding Uses:** The neighborhood is sparsely developed with widely scattered single-family dwellings as evidenced by the aerial photograph. The general neighborhood boundaries are:

G.

- Black Swamp Creek (north)
- Patuxent River Park (east and south)
- Aquasco Farm Road (south)
- Aquasco Road (west)

A high-tension power line traverses the neighborhood and subject property. Surrounding land is wooded, except for two single-family homes across from the subject property along the south side of Aquasco Farm Road, a rural open-section roadway. The Canter House/Covington Farm

(Historic Resource 87A-21) is adjacent to the northeast. The Historic Preservation Section indicates the subject application should have no effect on this adjacent historic resource.

H. **Specific Special Exception Requirements:**

**Section 27-107.01(82)** defines an eleemosynary or philanthropic institution as “any facility operated by a private, nonprofit organization offering religious, social, physical, recreational, emergency, or benevolent services, and which is not already specifically allowed in the various zones. The organization shall not carry on a business on the premises. The term shall not include an ‘Adult Day Care Center,’ ‘Congregate Living Facility’ or ‘Group Residential Facility.’”

**Section 27-364(a)(2)** permits a special exception for an eleemosynary or philanthropic institution, except exclusively office use, provided the property contains:

- (A) Total area—1 acre;
- (B) Street frontage—150 feet;
- (C) Setback—25 feet from all boundary lines of the special exception.

The proposed site plan indicates conformance with (A) through (C) above. The subject property comprises five-acres; has 786 feet of street frontage along Aquasco Farm Road, and the proposed structures are set back at least 25 feet from all boundary lines of the special exception.

H. **Parking Regulations:**

**Section 27-563 Connection to Street:** The proposed 22-foot-wide driveway conforms to this standard. However, because the driveway passes beneath the high-tension power line, the Permit Review Section indicates that the applicant will need to obtain permission from SMECO to construct the driveway through the public utility easement.

**Section 27-562 Lighting:** This section requires that adequate lighting be provided if the parking lot is to be used at night. The site plan has been revised to show two halogen lights mounted on rustic poles in close proximity to the two parking areas.

**Section 27-566 Parking Facilities for the Physically Handicapped:** The Permit Review Section (August 26, 2005, memorandum) indicates that the site plan must show an accessible ramp or other means of access from the handicap parking space to the lodge. The applicant has revised the site plans to locate a handicap accessible ramp as requested.

**Section 27-568 Parking Schedule:** Parking requirements for a campground are based on the number of tent sites and picnic tables. The site plan indicates four locations for glenshelters that are used for sleeping areas, each comprising 256 square feet. The Permit Review Section requested that picnic areas listed in the parking schedule be identified on the site plan and that the parking schedule be revised to indicate the types/dimensions of parking spaces provided.

The applicant has revised the site plan to show the location of four picnic areas; two are near three of the glenshelters located opposite the lodge, one is behind the lodge building, and one is adjacent to the parking compound. Because the total number of picnic tables is not indicated on the site plan, the amount of parking provided (10 spaces) will limit the number of tables to six. It is noted that the existing Camp Aquasco has one picnic area containing two picnic tables. The applicant has shown both standard and handicap parking, and dimensions have been added to the site plan.

	<b>Parking Space Requirement</b>	<b>Parking Provided</b>
4 tent sites (Glenshelters)	1 space/tent site	4 spaces
4 picnic areas	1 space/picnic table	4 spaces
<b>Total spaces required</b>		8 spaces, including one handicap space
<b>Total spaces provided</b>		10 spaces, including one handicap space

- I. **Landscape Manual Requirements:** The Permit Review Section indicates that the site is subject to Section 4.2 and Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*. The site plan shows retention of a 50-foot-wide strip of existing trees along Aquasco Farm Road, except where the driveway entrance is located entirely within the SMECO easement. This retained strip of woodlands will satisfy the landscaped requirements of Section 4.2.

Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual* requires that the site plan identify all adjacent land uses in order to determine what buffering (if any) may be required between potentially incompatible land uses. The site plan needs to show the adjacent single-family dwellings. Nonetheless, retention of the 50-foot-wide strip of existing trees along Aquasco Farm Road satisfies the requirements of Section 4.7.

J. **Other Issues:**

The Subdivision Section, (August 23, 2005, memorandum) indicates that a determination could not be made relative to whether a preliminary subdivision would be needed based on gross floor area. However, staff has determined that the proposed gross square footage of all improvements (4,464 square feet) will not require subdivision. Development of 5,000 square feet of gross floor area is permitted without approval of a preliminary plan, pursuant to Section 24-107(c)(7)(B) of the Subdivision Regulations.

K. **Required Findings:**

**Section 27-317(a) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that a special exception may be approved if:**

- (1) **The proposed use and site plan are in harmony with the purposes of this Subtitle.**

The purposes of the Zoning Ordinance are many and varied as set forth in Section 27-102. They can best be summed up as promoting the health, safety and welfare of county residents by providing for orderly growth and development, while promoting the most beneficial relationship between the uses of land and buildings. The proposed Girl Scout camp will not disrupt the orderly growth of the county as it is a use that complements and is compatible with the neighborhood's rural and natural character.

The facilities proposed in this application are nearly identical to the Girl Scout camp facilities that exist nearby on Parcel 73. The applicant indicates those camp facilities have operated within a similar-sized parcel for over ten years without any impingement to adjacent properties due to noise or traffic. However, because the usable space of the existing camp is limited by extreme topography, the Girl Scouts need additional space to accommodate demand. The applicant believes the subject property can provide additional camp space and similarly be operated in a

compatible manner. With the recommended conditions of approval, the proposed development will be harmonious with current and planned surrounding land uses.

**(2) The proposed use is in conformance with all the applicable requirements and regulations of this Subtitle.**

With the recommended conditions of approval, the proposed use and site plan will conform to all applicable requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and the *Landscape Manual*. An eleemosynary use is permitted by special exception in the O-S Zone in accordance with Section 27-441(b) and Section 27-364(a)(2).

**(3) The proposed use will not substantially impair the integrity of any validly approved Master Plan or Functional Master Plan, or in the absence of a Master Plan or Functional Map Plan, the General Plan.**

The Community Planning Division Staff have determined that the request is not inconsistent with the:

- 2002 General Plan Development Pattern policies for the Rural Tier, or
- Land use recommendations or policies for a private open space area in the Aquasco community as provided in the 1993 Subregion VI Study Area Master Plan.

The Subregion VI Master Plan recommends private open space use and designates the site within the natural reserve area to indicate sensitive areas to be preserved. The applicant indicates the “proposed use will have a minimal impact on natural vegetation and will incorporate ample tree conservation measures. Additionally, all clearing and grading activities will be kept to a minimum so as not to significantly disturb the natural setting of the requested special exception area within the entire 85.5 acre site” (referring to the entirety of Parcel 73).

It is noted that the existing Girl Scout camp, located nearby on Parcel 73, has been developed with minimal disruption or impact on surrounding woodland or slopes as observed during a site visit on October 4, 2005. In fact, that site is entirely self-contained with only a few short informal nature trails on minimally sloping land within approximately 100 yards of camp facilities.

**(4) The proposed use will not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of residents or workers in the area.**

The proposed operation of a Girl Scout campground by a charitable organization is not expected to create adverse effects on the public health, safety and welfare given the limited times it will be used. Rather, the facility is expected to enhance the quality of life for county residents. The camp will offer girls who live in the county and region positive opportunities to grow and benefit from various camp programs and activities. The applicant indicates that the additional space and facility capacity provided by their request will enable girls to camp within the county without having to travel elsewhere in the metropolitan area.

The proposed use will also be developed in accordance with all applicable regulations. The Transportation Planning Section (August 29, 2005, memorandum) finds that, in consideration of the limited trip generation of the proposed use, unanticipated capacity or safety issues on adjacent roadways is not expected. This finding recognizes that limited trip generation is expected because attendees for weekend sleepovers and summer day camp use will generally arrive and

leave by bus. Staff indicates that acceptable site access exists from Aquasco Farm Road, a rural open section roadway within a right-of-way that is generally 55 feet.

The Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) indicates that a 60-foot wide right-of-way is required for the entire property frontage along Aquasco Farm Road (August 30, 2005, memorandum). The site plan and any grading plans should be revised to provide a full dedication of 30 feet from roadway centerline. DPW&T also indicates that widening Aquasco Farm Road along the property's frontage is required, along with construction of an acceleration/deceleration lane and installation of street trees and streetlights in accordance with DPW&T standards. The applicant is required to obtain a standard street construction permit for roadway improvements, including the required posting of necessary bonds and the payment of permit fees.

Staff has discussed these recommendations with Mr. Senjalia of DPW&T in recognition of the following:

- Limited usage and specialized nature of the requested Girl Scout camp in this rural area on weekends and during one 3-week-long day camp during the summer;
- The fact that the existing Girl Scout camp, located elsewhere on the applicant's property, has not been required to provide roadway widening, acceleration and deceleration lanes and installation of street trees and streetlights;
- The use of buses to transport campers to and from the camp; and
- The environmental benefits of retaining mature woodland along the road frontage instead of removing trees, replanting with street trees, and providing street lights in this rural area.

After considering these circumstances, Mr. Senjalia indicated that the applicant need only provide dedication for the full 60-feet of right-of-way. Nonetheless, to ensure compliance with all DPW&T standards and procedures, the applicant should obtain a formal written waiver of these road standards from DPW&T prior to issuance of any grading or building permits. If DPW&T imposes these requirements, then the site plan would have to be revised to show road frontage improvements.

The Historic and Public Facilities Planning Section staff indicates that an underground water storage tank or other fire suppression system should be incorporated into the design of the facility, subject to the approval of the Fire Department (October 14, 2005, memorandum). A note should be placed on the site plan indicating that a fire suppression system should be approved by the Fire Department prior to issuance of any building permits. With regard to guidelines contained in the *Approved Public Safety Master Plan* (1990) and the *Guidelines for the Analysis of Development Impact on Fire and Rescue Facilities*, staff made the following findings:

- The existing fire engine and ambulance at Baden Company 36 have a service travel time of 9.5 minutes, respectively, which is beyond the 3.25-minute travel guideline;
- The existing paramedic at Brandywine Fire Station, Company 40, has a service travel time of 14.25-minutes, which is beyond the 7.25-minute travel time; and

The turning radius shown on the site plan is adequate to accommodate 40-foot fire engines. The proposed use is within the service area for Police District V. Based on current standards for adequacy of police facilities (1,278 county officers), staff indicates that adequate staff resources



exist to accommodate this request (1,302 sworn officers and 43 academy students as of 1/2/05). With the above improvements, the community's health, safety or welfare will be furthered. During the review of the building permit for the proposed use, the Fire Department will require that any deficiencies in response time be assessed. No additional conditions are, therefore, necessary.

**(5) The proposed use will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the general neighborhood.**

The proposed use will be entirely self-contained and concealed, surrounded by an existing wooded buffer proposed to be retained, with all structures at least 25 feet from special exception property lines. With the recommended conditions regarding Aquasco Farm Road and fire safety, the proposed use will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the surrounding neighborhood in general.

**(6) The proposed site plan is in conformance with an approved Tree Conservation Plan.**

The Environmental Planning Section staff (February 8, 2006, memorandum) indicates a Type II Tree Conservation Plan (TCP/II/129/93) has been approved for the overall Parcel 73 that contains 85.59 acres. Also, there is no Type I TCP for this site. The Environmental Planning Section's review indicates the following:

- “1. At the time of the original special exception approval, a forest stand delineation (FSD) was prepared. The FSD was found to meet the requirements of the Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance at that time. Although the FSD is more than five years old, the forest stand delineation has been found satisfactory for the subject application due to the limited amount of clearing proposed. Future development at this site may require a revised and/or updated FSD to reflect improved mapping of environmental features on site. No further information regarding the FSD is required.
- “2. The subject property was originally subject to the provisions of the Woodland Conservation Ordinance because it was greater than 40,000 square feet in area, contained more than 10,000 square feet of woodlands, and more than 5,000 square feet of woodland clearing was proposed.

“The current application continues to be subject to the Woodland Conservation Ordinance for the same reasons, and the property now has a previously approved Type II Tree Conservation Plan, TCP/II/129/93. The gross tract area of the approved TCP/II is 86.13 acres. With no 100-year floodplain and 0.55 acre of land previously dedicated to the county, the correct net tract area of TCP/II/129/93 is 85.83 acres.

“A revised Type II Tree Conservation Plan (TCP/II/129/93-01) was submitted with the current special exception application. The minimum requirement for this site is 42.79 acres (50 percent of the net tract) plus additional acres due to cumulative removal of woodlands totaling 1.85 acres, for a total minimum woodland conservation requirement of 43.25 acres.

“The TCP/II has proposed to meet the requirement with 43.26 acres of on-site preservation with 31.47 acres of additional woodlands retained that are not part of any requirement. Minor revisions to the format of the woodland conservation worksheet are required prior to signature approval of the TCP/II. These revisions are contained as recommended conditions in the conclusion section of this technical staff report.

- “3. No revised special exception plat was received by the Environmental Planning Section with the package stamped as received February 2, 2006. The previous special exception plat graphically showed the extent of the woodland conservation area, which is inappropriate because it is not a legal boundary.” The special exception plat shall, therefore, be revised to remove the areas graphically shown and labeled as “tree conservation area.”

Comment: In a subsequent discussion with the Environmental Planning Section staff to review the submitted “site plan” and “special exception plat,” it was determined that certain technical corrections to the site plan, special exception plat, and Type II TCP are required in order to eliminate confusion among plans and the possible need in the future to amend the special exception “site plan” and “plat” if changes are made to the TCPII. These technical corrections are listed as conditions in the conclusion section of this technical staff report.

In concluding, Section 27-364 requires that the site plan be in conformance with an approved tree conservation plan. If the conditions recommended by the Environmental Planning Section are approved, and the respective plans revised, then an approvable tree conservation plan will be provided to meet this finding.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Based on the above analysis, staff finds that with the recommended conditions below, the requested use, site plan, and Type II tree conservation plan will conform to the purposes of the Zoning Ordinance and all applicable regulations. The use is compatible with the area master plan’s rural land use recommendations and the use and development of adjacent properties. The recommended conditions will advance the health, safety, or welfare of residents, workers, and campers. Therefore, staff recommends APPROVAL of Special Exception Application SE-4538, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to approval of this special exception, the submitted site plan shall be revised to show:
  - a. A parking schedule that identifies the number of picnic tables in each picnic area, with a limitation not to exceed six tables for the entire site.
  - b. The location or distance to the nearest single-family dwellings on adjacent property.
  - c. The removal of areas shown and labeled as “woodland preservation area” and “tree conservation area,” including removal of the “woodland preservation area” designation in the legend box.
  - d. Dedication of a full 60-foot-wide right-of-way for the entire property frontage along Aquasco Farm Road.
2. Prior to approval of this special exception, the submitted TCPII shall be revised to show the following:
  - a. Correct the date of the TCPII to reflect 2/1/06, not 6/3/05.
  - b. Label “Item M” on the woodland conservation worksheet to read “Woodland Conservation Required” and label the next line to read “Woodland Conservation Provided.”

- c. Since all woodland conservation proposed is preservation, “woodland preservation” should be the total amount of woodland conservation provided, 43.26 acres.
  - d. The line labeled “Reforestation/Replacement” should be relabeled “Reforestation” in accordance with the Prince George’s County worksheet format, and the amount should be given as 0.00 acres, since no reforestation is proposed.
  - e. The quantity of “additional woodland retained but not part of any requirement” should be corrected to 31.47 acres.
  - f. Have the TCPII signed and dated by the qualified professional who prepared it.
3. Prior to approval of the special exception, the submitted “special exception plat” shall be revised to remove the meandering line illustrated on SE-4538 that symbolizes proposed tree line designation.
4. Prior to the approval of any building or grading permits, the applicant shall:
- a. Obtain written permission from SMECO to construct the driveway through the public utility easement.
  - b. Dedicate to the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) a full 60-foot-wide right-of-way for the entire property frontage along Aquasco Farm Road prior to issuance of any grading plans.
  - c. Obtain from DPW&T a formal written waiver of road standards related to roadway pavement, acceleration/deceleration lanes, street trees, and streetlights.