

STAFF REPORT

**PLEASE REFER TO DRCC # WHEN SUBMITTING
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS**



DRCC #:19-3406C

DATE: August 11, 2021

PROJECT NAME: Pillar of Fire International -- Proposed Parking Area Expansion

Latest Submission Received: July 23, 2021

Applicant:

Pillar of Fire International
c/o Al Shjarback
10 Chapel Drive
Franklin, NJ 08890
ashjarback@zarephath.org

Engineer:

Mike Ford, P.E.
Van Cleef Engineering Associates, LLC
32 Brower Lane
PO Box 5877
Hillsborough, NJ 08844
mford@vancleefengineering.com

Project Location:

Road	Municipality	County	Block(s)	Lot(s)
2 Ministry Center Drive	Franklin Township	Somerset	516	1.01

Jurisdictional Determination:

Zone A	Major	Nongovernmental
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Subject to Review for:

Drainage	Visual	Stream Corridors	Traffic
X	X		X

THIS STAFF REPORT IS ISSUED AS A GUIDE TO APPLICANTS IN COMPLYING WITH DRCC REGULATIONS. IT IS NOT AN APPROVAL. NO CONSTRUCTION SHALL BEGIN UNTIL A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL HAS BEEN ISSUED.

Documents Received: Operation and Maintenance Manual (31 pages) dated October 16, 2019, revised June 3, 2021; Storm Drainage Report (184 pages) dated October 16, 2019 revised July 16, 2021; Site Plans (11 sheets) dated September 23, 2019 last revised July 16, 2021, prepared by Van Cleef Engineering Associates, LLC.

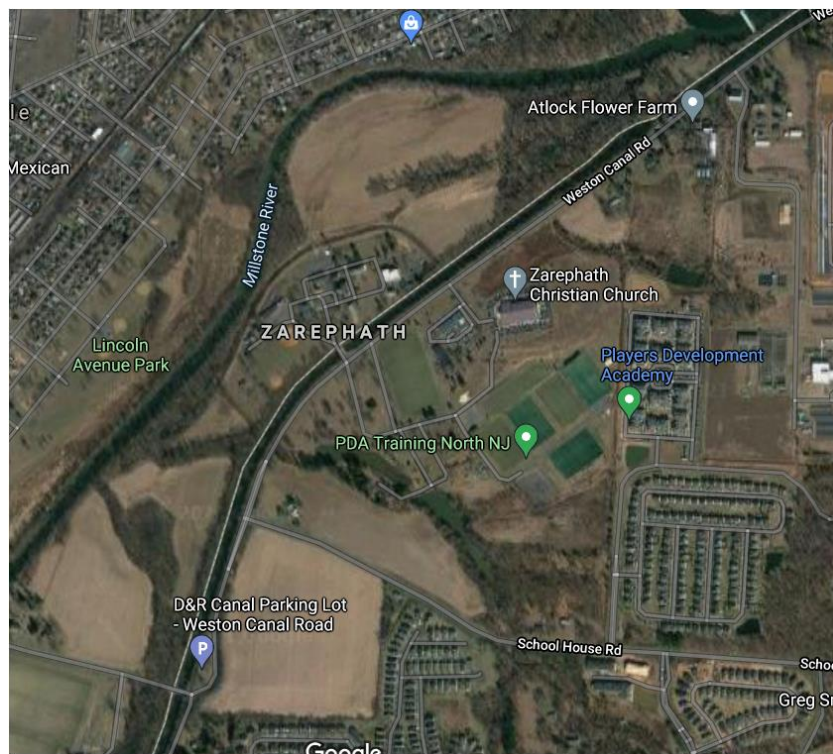
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Staff comments continued below.

The application is complete and shall be presented to the Commission for their action with a staff recommendation of approval at the August 18, 2021 meeting, based upon the following analysis:

Existing Conditions: The project site is a 144.8-acre property constituting part of a college campus, and includes: 18 buildings of various sizes including a House of Worship; 6 athletic fields; a cemetery; sidewalks; access ways and parking areas. The site is located on both the eastern and western sides of Weston Canal Road in the unincorporated community of Zarephath in Franklin Township, Somerset County.



The campus open space areas consist of grass cover in good condition as well as landscaping around the buildings. The site also features a collection of State open waters, freshwater wetlands, and a stormwater detention basin that discharges to the north. The Delaware and Raritan Canal bisects the campus, and the Millstone River runs through its the western edge. The campus is located in both Commission Review Zone A and Zone B. Pursuant to the definition of “Review Zone” at N.J.A.C. 7:45-1.3, if any part of a project site is located within Review Zone A then the entire project shall be considered to be in Zone A.

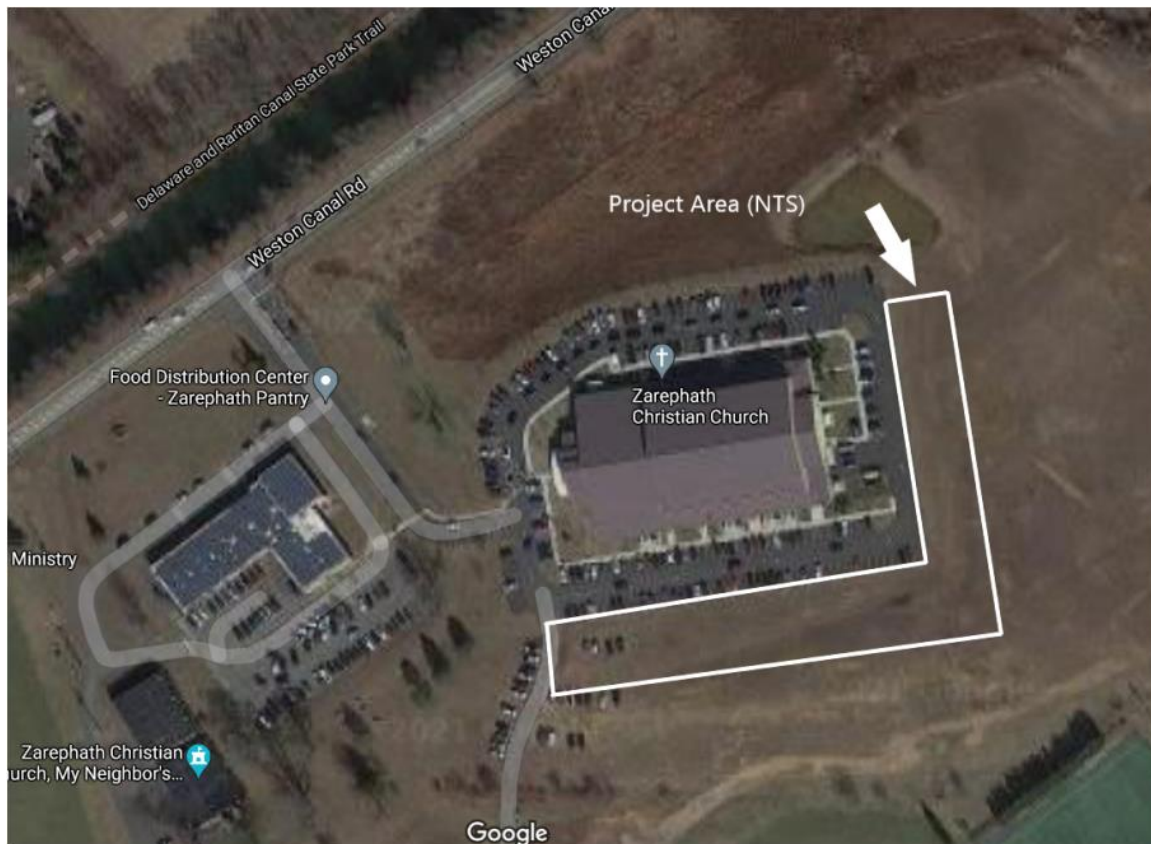
The site has been the subject of Commission reviews and approvals for the installation of athletic field lighting in 2012 (DRCC #11-3406A) and the construction of a community center in 2013 (DRCC# 06-3406). These projects were identified as including Block 516, Lots 1, 2, and 3 and Block 515, Lots 3 and 5, at the time of their review.

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Subsequently, it appears that Block 516, Lots 1, 2, and 3 have been consolidated and renamed as Block 516.01, Lot 1.01.

Proposed Project: The applicant proposes to expand the existing House of Worship (see aerial image below) paved parking area to accommodate approximately 244 additional parking spaces. The site currently has 251 parking spaces so the proposed future parking will accommodate a total of 475 parking spaces. A 4,860 square foot (0.11 acre) portion of the proposed parking will consist of pervious pavement. As part of the project, an existing emergency access driveway will be realigned and a light pole on the east side of the building will be relocated.



Currently, the area to be developed features a swale that collects runoff by means of overland flow and conveys it to an existing detention basin. Based upon the submitted application, the proposed net increase in the amount of impervious surface area coverage onsite will be about 1.58 acres. The proposed project would also result in an area of land disturbance of about 4.36 acres.

Stream Corridor: The project site is located within the Millstone River watershed area. There are various streams with associated floodplains and stream corridors located onsite. First, there is a stream corridor onsite associated with the Millstone River. The floodplain of the Millstone River extends across the main campus and onto the southeasterly portion of the campus across Weston Canal Road. The limits of the 100-year floodplain along the Millstone River are identified by an existing NJDEP flood

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study. Second, there is a stream corridor associated with a tributary to the Millstone River that flows along the southern property boundary. This stream drains approximately 418 acres onsite. The 100-year floodplain for this tributary had been previously estimated by the applicant using the NJDEP approximate method in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:13-3.5. There is also a smaller stream on the northern corner of the site, however, this stream drains less than 50 acres, and therefore does not have a stream corridor associated with it.

As part of a previous application, the applicant agreed to preserve the stream corridors associated with the entire campus. Specifically, the applicant was to preserve 3 separate stream corridor areas totaling approximately 178 acres. One stream corridor easement area, located on Block 515, Lots 3 and 5, is approximately 136 acres in size between the Millstone River and the Delaware and Raritan Canal; it would specifically exclude a 26 acre area on Weston Canal Road for existing buildings on the campus. The other stream corridor area is located across Weston Canal Road with a 4.3 acre area along Weston Canal Road near the project site and an approximately 38 acre area along Weston Canal near Schoolhouse Road. The 136-acre tract was previously a sod farm and farming was to be discontinued on this site as part of the easement agreement.

The currently proposed parking lot expansion project will be located outside of the Commission stream corridor areas. Therefore, this project is not subject to stream corridor impact review pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:45-9.1(a).

Stormwater Runoff Quantity: The applicant is proposing an increase in the amount of impervious area that will result in an associated increase in runoff as compared to the existing conditions. To mitigate for these proposed impacts, the submitted application proposes to control and collect stormwater runoff through the use of an already existing stormwater best management practice (BMP) measure, consisting of an existing detention basin with a forebay comprised of a sand filter with underdrain.

The detention basin detains stormwater runoff and discharges outflows through an outlet control structure towards Weston Canal Road. The original design of the existing detention basin had been modeled using outdated rainfall depths and outdated rainfall distributions. As part of this current design, the existing basin has been re-modeled using updated rainfall depth data and updated rainfall distribution data. The stormwater management measures for the current project have been designed so that for stormwater leaving the site, post-construction runoff hydro graphs for the 2-, 10- and 100-year storm events do not exceed, at any point in time, the pre-construction runoff hydrographs for the same storm events.

The submitted calculations utilized the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Technical Release No. 55 (TR-55) hydrologic methodology, NOAA Region C unit hydrograph rainfall distribution and current New Jersey 24-hour rainfall frequency data for Somerset County to compute peak runoff flow rates and volumes. Based upon a review of the submitted calculations, the proposed stormwater management measures will provide enough peak flow attenuation to meet the specific runoff quantity standards of N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.6(a)1.

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Water Quality: The Commission requires that all proposed full-depth pavement including newly and reconstructed parking and access drives that are being renewed, must meet water quality standards in accordance with Commission regulations (N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.7). This includes reduction of the post-construction load of total suspended solids (TSS) in stormwater runoff generated from the water quality design storm by a rate of 80 percent (%) of the anticipated load from the developed site, expressed as an annual average.

Based upon the submitted application, 1.58 acres of new paved parking areas are being proposed onsite. In order to address water quality, stormwater BMP measures are being employed, which consist of utilizing a pervious pavement system. Specifically, 26,020 square feet (0.60 acre) of pervious pavement areas will be located within various parking spaces and will consist of a 5-inch-thick, porous bituminous surface layer over a minimum 1-inch-thick choker course, over a bed of clean washed stone storage. Pervious pavement systems that are designed in accordance with the NJ Stormwater BMP Manual will provide an 80% TSS removal. Therefore, the proposed stormwater quality measures have been designed in accordance with the requirements of N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.7.

Groundwater Recharge: The Commission's regulations require that stormwater management measures maintain 100% of the average annual preconstruction groundwater recharge volume for the site; or that any increase of stormwater runoff volume from pre-construction to post-construction for the 2-year storm is infiltrated. A groundwater recharge analysis calculation (NJDEP GSR-32 spreadsheet) has been submitted, which demonstrates that the annual groundwater recharge deficit for the project area is 82,197 cubic-feet. In order to provide mitigation for this recharge deficit, stormwater runoff will recharge into the ground through the proposed pervious pavement system with stone storage. The thickness of the stone storage has been designed to accommodate and infiltrate a greater amount than the annual groundwater recharge deficit, or a total of 101,747 cubic-feet of annual recharge. Therefore, the groundwater recharge requirements of N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.5 have been addressed.

Non-Structural Methods: The Commission requires that nonstructural stormwater management strategies be incorporated into the stormwater design of a development project. To assist in determining that sufficient non-structural stormwater management strategies have been incorporated into the project site design "to the maximum extent practical", the NJDEP Nonstructural Strategies Point System (NSPS) spreadsheet has been completed for this project. The results indicate that the ratio of proposed to existing site points (133%) are greater than or equal to the required site points ratio (109%). Therefore, the project has proposed non-structural measures that are adequate, and the project is therefore designed in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.4.

Stormwater Management Maintenance Plan: A stormwater management operation and maintenance plan document has been prepared and submitted for the BMP elements proposed for the proposed project. The plan includes maintenance details for the proposed stormwater BMP measures including the porous pavement area systems and the

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detention basin. The submitted plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.8.

Since a portion of the project stormwater runoff from the site enters an already existing stormwater detention basin, the applicant has provided a July 2020 basin inspection report for the existing basin to confirm continual ongoing maintenance and to rate the current condition of the basin. The inspection report notes that the basin has been allowed to meadow and despite the noted vegetation growth, there do not appear to be blockages or negative impacts to the function of the basin. The basin report concluded that the components of the detention basin are in good, working condition.

The report further noted that the forebay does have standing water despite having a sand bottom. Therefore, the forebay is not currently infiltrating as intended. The applicant is proposing to reconstruct the basin forebay area as part of this application. The existing layer of sand will be removed and replaced and a 3-inch perforated underdrain lateral system beneath the sand filter will added to ensure that runoff will drain properly, thereby eliminating the presence of any standing water.

Visual, Historic and Natural Quality Impact: As noted hereinabove, the project area is located in both Commission Review Zone A and Zone B. Pursuant to the definition of “Review Zone” at N.J.A.C. 7:45-1.3, if any part of a project site is located within Review Zone A then the entire project shall be considered to be in Zone A.

Specifically, the project is located in a “Rural with Natural Access” canal environment as described in the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park Master Plan (Master Plan). The Rural canal environment name is characterized at N.J.A.C. 7:45-10.2(a) as an area in which signs of human impact are non-existent or slight.

The applicant has submitted a written request pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:45-12.2 for a waiver of strict adherence with the visual, historic and natural quality impact review standards pursuant to the criteria set forth at N.J.A.C. 7:45-12.7(a), which states that projects otherwise subject to the visual, historic and natural quality standards may be waived from strict adherence to such standards, if the applicant establishes to the satisfaction of the Commission that visual screening will continue to exist in the future, and;

Wherever possible, natural terrains, soils and vegetation are to be preserved, and new vegetation and soils are to be native to the environment in which they are placed; and

- The topography of the land screens the entire project from the view of a person in the park;
- Existing structures screen the entire project from the view of a person in the park;
- or
- Vegetation located on preserved land screens the entire project from the view of a person in the park during the winter season.

The applicant’s waiver submission notes that the majority of the proposed expanded parking lot would be situated behind the existing House of Worship, and would be

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entirely screened from the view of a person in the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park by the existing church building and the existing trees on preserved land within the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park. Furthermore, the applicant notes that the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park multiuse trail, which is located on the opposite embankment of the canal from the project area, lies approximately 10 feet below Weston Canal Road and approximately 25 feet below the finished floor elevation corresponding to the House of Worship, which in turn is located more than 300 feet from the Weston Canal Road right-of-way boundary.

The applicant notes that this elevation difference will further screen the expanded parking lot from the park, and that the aforementioned trees lie within a buffer that is approximately 30 feet wide and located on land owned by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Finally, the project would not involve the importation of foreign vegetation or soil, thus satisfying the requirement that wherever possible, natural terrains, soils and vegetation are to be preserved, and new vegetation and soils are to be native to the environment in which they are placed.

The applicant supports these assertions with the aerial image below:



Commission staff agrees that the applicant has met the applicable criteria at N.J.A.C. 7:45-12.7(a) for a waiver of strict adherence with the visual, historic and natural quality impact review standards, and recommends that the Commission grant the requested waiver.

Traffic Impact: N.J.A.C. 7:45-11.1 directs that the Commission shall review major projects in Review Zone A for their traffic impact on roads that enter the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park or any part of Zone A. The regulation directs that the applicant

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shall submit a traffic impact study that shows the amount of additional traffic generated by the project and the directions in which this traffic will move.

The applicant has submitted the required traffic study, which notes that the existing Zarephath Ministry Center has access to Weston Canal Road by way of an existing stop-controlled T-intersection with Ministry Center Drive providing access to the site and approaching Weston Canal Road from the east as the stem of the T-intersection under stop control. The existing site access intersection includes a southbound exclusive left-turn lane from Weston Canal Road, along with separate left and right turn lanes for traffic existing the site.

The traffic study conducted manual traffic control counts taken at this intersection on a Sunday morning, which is the busiest time period for traffic activity at the existing House of Worship, which is the location of well attended church services at 9:00 a.m. and again at 11:00 a.m. There is also a much smaller service on Saturday evening and no other activities that generate significant traffic during the rest of the week.

The traffic study concludes that the proposed parking expansion would improve on-site parking conditions during the changeover between the 9:00 and 11:00 church services on Sunday morning. The project accommodate existing parking activity, but no additional traffic impact is expected to be generated as a result of the project, nor would it alter the directions in which the present traffic moves.

Given the foregoing, Commission staff concurs that the project would not generate any additional traffic, or alter the directions in which this traffic will move in relation to the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park. Therefore, staff concludes that the project would not have an adverse impact upon the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval.

Sincerely,



John Hutchison
Executive Director

- c. Franklin Township Planning Board
Somerset County Planning Board
Peter U. Lanfrit, Esq. (peter@borrus.com) (erin@borrus.com)