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Item 5 – Concept Plan: Orange United Methodist Church

Mr. Poveromo said that this proposal was for construction of 38,089 square feet of additional floor area and 122 new parking spaces at Orange United Methodist Church. He displayed an aerial map, noting the site was located on the east side of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard at its intersection with Homestead Road. Mr. Poveromo noted the site contained R-1 and R-2 zoning. He pointed out on the map the R-1 portion of the site and the R-2 portion where the church was currently located. Mr. Poveromo noted that Lake Ellen was located to the east of the site.

No response required of this item.

Mr. Poveromo noted that the Community Design Commission (CDC) had reviewed this plan on September 28, and the applicant had submitted a revised site plan on November 11. He said the CDC comments focused on the intersection where the existing entrance to the parking area was located. Mr. Poveromo said the CDC's concern was about traffic backing up in that area and the revised plan addressed that issue.

No response required of this item.

Project Manager Phil Post displayed the revised site plan and explained their planned expansion to the Church. He said that Orange United Methodist Church had been worshipping at this site for 180 years and had strong community and religious roots in this location, and wanted to continue that as they went forward with their expansion plans for the campus.

No response required of this item.

Mr. Post said he would discuss the build out of the site, noting it contained 15 acres with an RCD along Booker Creek and other drainage ways. He said that all of the proposed development would be outside of those drainage ways, adding that a large majority of the site would remain undisturbed by the development, including the cemetery area.

No response required of this item.

Mr. Post said they wanted to honor a number of the environmental and historical roots, and at the same time continue to build on the assets of the campus. He said from the south, they planned to build an addition to the existing log cabin used for educational purposes. Mr. Post pointed out the existing worship area on the map, noting it would remain as an alternate worship area with a new expanded worship area constructed to the north.

No response required of this item.

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Council Member Harrison said it was difficult to tell from the site plan the new structures. Mr. Post explained the color-coding system used on the site plan. Council Member Harrison commented that as requested the Council was now receiving more detailed comments from the CDC. He said the CDC had requested that the applicant submit an existing condition site plan and he believed that would have helped the Council have a better understanding of what was proposed. Council Member Harrison said he had some knowledge of the campus, but it was hard to visualize the new campus from the site plan.

We believe the amended SUP documents, along with the powerpoint slides and color presentations that will be given to Advisory Boards and Council, will solve this question.

Council Member Verkerk commented that she found the architecture of the church to be attractive and enjoyed passing by it. She said she was disturbed by the fact that presently the church had 110 parking spaces, and was asking for a total of 236. Council Member Verkerk noted that was more than double what was presently on the site.

The church facilities will now seat 900 worshipers at one time on the campus. Town guidelines allow 248 spaces for this size facility. The church is proposing 267 spaces. We believe the proposed on-site parking is reasonable, because there is no available street parking. We believe our plans are within the letter and spirit of LUMO for a site surrounded by arterial roads, RCD and undeveloped woodlands.

Council Member Verkerk said one of the things that bothered her about church parking was that it was a wide-open space of asphalt, and that was not the direction the Town wanted to move in. She asked Mr. Post to make a commitment to consider that the church would not need that parking at all times, and to think about using that parking for other purposes, such as a park and ride lot.

Orange United Methodist Church has fully investigated this possibility and believes that the safety concerns because of weekday use as a daycare, make a park and ride lot incompatible with weekday needs.

Mayor pro tem Wiggins said the reason to include the possibility of a park and ride lot was that if the project was approved without it and it was later decided to use it for that, then a modification to the Special Use Permit would have to be sought.

The Church believes a park and ride would be incompatible with a daycare and with weekday church uses, primarily because of security issues and the need for church parking for weddings, funerals, weekday services and meetings.

Council Member Ward said the applicant had indicated its desire to be proactive in regards to stormwater management, and asked that they consider the use of porous pavement, adding that this was a wonderful open site without a lot of trees that would

clog the porous pavement. He said that would aid in reducing the footprint of the retention pond and reduce the amount of clear cutting required in the RCD. Council Member Ward said as is, he did not believe this project did what Mr. Post had stated they wanted to do, which was to do what was the very best for stormwater management. He commented that the area underneath the parking could be used for storage in order to eliminate the clear cutting.

The stormwater detention system has been placed underground. This has reduced disturbance in the Upland Zone of the RCD area considerably, down to 2000 SF, which is the minimum needed for the outlet pipe only. Instead of porous paving, which only reduces runoff, we have chosen for all new parking surfaces to be treated by bio-retention "rain gardens", which reduce runoff and treat stormwater to improve water quality. We believe the goals of Council member Ward have been met with our current plans.

Council Member Ward said looking at the map which included the Dixie Drive neighborhood, there appeared to be a lot for a road which was never built. He said he would like to see how that could work with this project to provide a pedestrian corridor to allow people to flow through that area. Depending on the terrain, Council Member Ward said he would like to see bicycle access provided as well, both to the church's property as well as the Moody trailer park property to provide a non-vehicular access through that area.

The existing terrain and the existing RCD, in our opinion, do not allow this pedestrian corridor, within the cleared areas proposed by OUMC.

Council Member Ward said while the Council and staff had not yet found to time to make significant changes in the outdoor lighting regulations, they had discussed making them significantly better for the environment. He asked the applicant to look at the Orange County requirements, noting that was the direction the Council was moving. Council Member Ward said he would like to see the applicant submit a lighting plan that respected the outdoor environment.

All the lighting will be down-light, non-glare fixtures in conformance with Orange County guidelines.

Council Member Hill said he enjoyed passing by the church, noting it was an attractive campus. He said one of the things he most enjoyed about the campus was the soccer fields to the north, noting there were children playing there much of the time. Council Member Hill said the plan was to replace that area with parking spaces as well as cut down many trees for a play area that appeared to be half the size of the present one. He said he would like the applicant to consider keeping the current playing fields where they were and moving the parking around the back of the church. Council Member Hill said that would improve what you would see as you traveled on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, noting he would much rather see the playing fields than the cars.

In response to this comment OUMC, purchased a 2.5 acre lot on the north side of the campus. This allowed the playfield to be relocated and enlarged exactly in accordance with this comment. Parking spaces were moved to the rear in accordance with this comment.

Council Member Hill said another alternative use for all of that asphalt other than a park and ride lot, was that many people were searching for places to play roller hockey. He said if the parking area was built in the right shape, it could be used for that. Council Member Hill commented that the planned parking was a whole lot of asphalt to be used only on Sundays. He noted it probably was not feasible to attempt to provide parking along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Our proposed stormwater and water quality solution will involve bio-retention "islands". These "islands" will conflict with roller hockey. We regret we could not conform to this suggestion.

Council Member Greene said she agreed with the comments made regarding the intensity of the use, especially the parking and what was planned for the RCD. She asked if the number of parking spaces requested had a relation to what was required by the Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO). Mr. Post stated that the minimum requirements in LUMO would be 223, with an additional 10 percent, or 245, as the maximum. He said what they were proposing was within that range. Council Member Greene asked if Mr. Post was aware that there was concern on the Council as to whether there should even be a minimum. Mr. Post said he was aware of that and would keep it in mind as they moved forward.

The campus will seat 900 worshipers. The minimum parking is 225 spaces. Ten percent above the minimum is 248 spaces. The church is proposing 267 spaces because it is isolated by arterial streets, RCD and undeveloped woodlands, and there is absolutely no opportunity for street parking.

Council Member Strom said it would be worth looking at moving the new sanctuary closer to the road, where the new parking was shown at the existing playing fields. He said that was becoming an urban corridor and he would prefer seeing some interesting architecture there rather than asphalt.

All the buildings have been moved closer to the road to emphasize the structures and the architecture along this Town entryway.

Council Member Strom said he would ask that the applicant remove the highly invasive activities, such as grading, that would be required within the RCD with the proposed plans. He said he realized what was proposed was allowed by the ordinance, but he believed this plan carried that to its maximum.

The storm water detention facility has been moved completely out of the RCD and has been placed underground beneath the parking lot. Only minimal grading is being

performed in the RCD area for the outlet pipes of the detention system. In the 2.5 acres the church purchased to the north, some existing pines will be removed and the area will be gently leveled to create a playfield as requested by the Council Member.

Mayor Foy said he believed the message from the Council was that the parking was intense, and to stay away from the RCD. He said he agreed that the site would be better used by moving the buildings closer to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Mayor Foy said if the buildings were moved, it would take advantage of that corridor which would be a more urbanized corridor in the future, and it would make those buildings more accessible for people to walk to.

We have moved the buildings in accordance with this comment. We have stayed out of the RCD to the maximum extent possible and significantly reduced the RCD disturbance down to a minimum of 21,350 SF.

Mayor Foy said regarding the parking, what would be used for the surface. He said he believed the Council would be happier if a pervious material were used.

See our response to Council member Ward. We believe the bio-retention areas we propose will accomplish this goal, as well as furnish water quality benefits which makes our proposal superior to porous paving.

Mayor Foy said regarding what Council Member Hill had stated, was it possible to provide parking along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard is a five-lane NCDOT roadway with bus stops. NCDOT will not allow any street parking. This is the primary reason we are requesting 267 on-site spaces.

Mayor Foy asked Mr. Post to research that with Town staff to see if there was a way to do that safely

NCDOT has said "no to parking along Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard"

Mayor Foy said on the CDC recommendation comment #6 mentioned a superceded master plan that they would want the applicant to reconsider.

Mr. Post said this had resulted from an older, outdated map that the CDC had been given inadvertently. He said it was a procedural error and it had been corrected in what was presented to Council in this Concept presentation.

Frederick Brooks said he had participated on the building committee when the earlier expansion was done, and they had gone out of their way to hire the most talented architect they could find that specialized in churches. He said because this area was an important entrance to the Town, they had wanted the church to be visually attractive.