



July 17, 2025

Subject: CFFC Comments on SPEX -23-020814

Dear Planning Commissioners:

I am writing on behalf of Citizens for Fauquier County (CFFC) regarding the special exception (SPEX-23-020814) requested by the Bridge Community Assembly of God Church which would allow a substantial expansion of its current operations from approximately 20,000 square feet to over 35,000 square feet not including the office building.

Overall, CFFC is concerned with the significant expansion of an institutional use on 33.78 acres which is surrounded by rural and rural residential properties including several immediately adjacent properties in conservation easement. CFFC also is concerned about the number of conditions in the staff report and the lack of clearly defined uses that would be permitted on the property including uses that do *not* appear to be “customarily associated with religious institutions” (County Code) such as “safety training”, “fine arts practice”, and “water wars” all of which are included on the Church Events calendar. “Youth activities” are not defined at all nor limited to activities “customarily associated with religious institutions.” Both the number of conditions (40) and the lack of well-defined activities will likely lead to disputes and enforcement challenges. This special exception if granted will permit significant activity 7 days a week and is intended to accommodate the Church’s future growth.

Specifically with respect to certain conditions in the Staff Report, CFFC offers the following comments for your consideration:

Staff Report Condition #3

*The use of the Ministry Center Building, office building, and multi-purpose building shall be exclusively limited to a Place of Worship and those uses **incidental thereto**. Use of the nursery within the Ministry Center shall be exclusively limited to church attendees during church-related activities. Any other uses, including but not limited to schools, athletic facilities, and daycare centers, shall not be permitted unless the appropriate approvals are obtained.*

Compare the above Condition to the definition allowed activities of Place of Worship in the County Zoning Ordinance:

*Activities that are ancillary to and **customarily associated with a religious institution** shall be permitted such as parish houses, rectories, parsonages, Sunday schools, accessory nursery/childcare during services and church events, and administrative offices directly pertaining to that structure and/or activities taking place on that property.*



CFFC suggests that, at a minimum, the County replace the language “incidental thereto” in Condition #3 with the language from the County Ordinance which require all activities to be “customarily associated with a religious institution”. At a minimum, the County should require that the activities already contained on the Church event calendar have some relationship to religion. In particular Youth activities should be defined. The mere attendance of events by Church members does not make that event one “customarily associated with a religious institution.”

There are also no limits on outdoor activities in the Staff Report. In view of the surrounding residential properties, some limits on the number of outdoor activities and time and place should be included in the Conditions. Although the Conditions state that the multiple buildings shall be limited to worship and incidental uses, the Report is silent with respect to outdoor uses and this should be addressed.

Staff Report Condition #7

Condition #7 “generally” limits Sunday attendance to 3 Sunday services totaling 1959 attendees plus another 50 attendees on Sunday for “fine arts practice” which should be defined and meet the “customarily associated” requirement in the County ordinance.

Condition #7 also permits one worship team practice but is unclear if that can occur every night Monday through Friday or once a week M-F and that language should be revised to be clearer. The same is true for subsection (c) pertaining to weddings, banquets, breakfasts, safety trainings or “other similar events”. As written, it is unclear whether there can be only one of these many types of events each week or whether the limit to “one” applies only to weddings. If multiple events of 100 people for each event are allowed, the County should evaluate the impact.

Condition #7 also allows youth activities/services on Wednesday and Thursdays up to 310 attendees per week but no more than 180 in any one day. Again, “youth activities” should be consistent with the “customarily associated with” requirement in the County Ordinance.

Staff Report Condition #9

Once the multi-purpose building is built, Youth activities will move to that building for no more than 4 days per week. The weekly number of attendees increases from 310 to 630 . Based on the Church Event calendar, this appears to be an expansion of existing Youth activities. CFFC suggests that the County determine what additional activities are planned in addition to requiring that all Youth activities meet the “customarily associated with” requirement.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Ewing
Marshall Representative
CFFC Land Use Committee