

July Newsletter

Large Church Complex Next to Ag. Zone

Global Mission Church is trying to obtain permission from the Frederick County Planning Commission to construct a huge church with a 1,160 seat sanctuary and a 500 seat dining hall on a site on the southwest side of Interstate 270 almost on the line with Montgomery County. In fact access to the site will be from Route 109 in Montgomery County, a designated 'rustic' road that provides major access to the Agriculture Reserve and Sugarloaf Mountain.

The legal team and officials representing the Global Mission Church proposal have done all the right things to gain the required permits. Technically the complex meets that code established for agriculture land in Frederick County. Montgomery County officials including Executive Isaiah Leggett have endorsed the plan. The matter was to be decided on July 15 by the Frederick County planning commissioners but a last minute appeal by residents of both counties raised enough issues to delay the decision for 90 days.

Official endorsement of the project largely rests on whether the applicants have met the code requirements for building in a rural area of Frederick County and if the driveway to the proposed facility meets the rules of the Maryland Highway Commission and Montgomery County. There are much larger issues that are totally missing from the official process.

1. Why build such a large church in a rural area where the congregation is required to drive miles just to attend services? We should be reducing highway travel.
2. Since the church is to be located in Frederick County, residents of Montgomery County only learned of its plans at the last minute. It is vital that the two counties find ways to involve all impacted residents when buildings are proposed on the county line.
3. The expanded use of a 'rustic' road must not be so easily dismissed by official degree. Route 109 is extensively used by bikers, visitors, farmers and residents on Sundays. The potential traffic concerns should be a part of the permitting process.
4. Both Frederick and Montgomery Counties have ordinances and other initiatives to protect agriculture land from development so we have places to grow food in our future. The proposed large church complex is a first step leading to the erosion of farm land preservation on the Sugarloaf side of Interstate 270.

Religious institutions that serve the needs of local residents are cherished aspects of any community. This one is proposed for the wrong location and is out of scale with the surrounding rural community. We hope the church officials will build in a more suitable place and that planning officials of Frederick and Montgomery counties will find ways to address the larger issues of such proposals beyond building codes and the size of septic systems.