

**PLANNING STAFF REPORT  
MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
FREE GOSPEL CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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**SUMMARY:**

**Hearing Date:** May 6, 2014

**Applicant:** The Way of Truth Free Gospel Church of Christ

**Property Owner:** Same

**Case Number:** 11147

**Development Proposal:** Applicant is requesting Master Development Plan approval for the construction of a two (2) phased Religious Organization (NAICS 8131) and activity center.

**Location and Land Use:** The proposed project will be located along the east side of US Hwy 117, between River Road (SR 1501) and Church Street (SR 1312), just south of Wallace, NC. The properties can be identified as PIN(s) 3314-28-1506-0000; 3314-18-8863-0000. The site is currently vacant and is immediately surrounded by low density residential and agricultural/forestry uses.

**Zoning District of Property:** The properties contain approximately 7.42 acres and are zoned OI, Office & Institutional District

**Staff Recommendation:** Planning Staff recommends conditional approval based on Major Site Development Plan items being met as well as the consideration of the Technical Review Committee (TRC) and Planning Board comments.

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**Description of Proposal:**

The Way of Truth Free Gospel Church of Christ, applicant and owner, is requesting approval of a Master Development Plan for a commercial development consisting of a religious organization and activity center. The project is proposed to be constructed in two (2) phases with the church and associated parking and infrastructure consisting of the first phase and an activity center, softball field, and associated parking and infrastructure for the second phase. According to the application and submitted site plan, the project consists of two tracts totaling 7.42 acres which are split by a sixty (60) foot private access easement. The southern tract will contain the church while the northern tract will contain the activity center and softball field.

**Phase I**

The Phase I tract will contain an 8,034 sq. ft. church facility and associated parking. According to the applicant provided narrative, 98 parking spaces will be provided. According to Section 7.5.10.C of the Pender County Unified Development Ordinance, parking spaces provided in excess of the minimum required shall be constructed to use low impact design. Parking for the church will be determined based on the available seating within the assembly area and will need to be evaluated once architectural plans have been submitted delineating this area from others within the facility. Ingress and egress to Phase I is being shown as coming directly off of US Hwy 117, just south of the existing dirt access point, which is the current access point to the site.

**Phase II**

Phase II of the project will consist of a 16,331 sq. ft. activity center. The applicant is proposing 67 parking spaces to accommodate the needs of the activity center and recreational opportunities provided by the softball facilities. The potential for shared parking opportunities between the church and activity center may be appropriate. Also, it should be noted that pedestrian safety needs to be taken in to consideration. Signage and striping should be installed across the parking facilities directing pedestrian traffic in a safe, efficient manner.

**Environmental**

Stormwater produced by the development will be treated and conveyed to an on-site retention facility located along the northern boundary of the tract. According to NCDENR, Division of Water Resources, the applicant has submitted application to the State for this project. A detailed schematic of this facility is shown on Sheet C-II of their submitted site plan.

The property is not located within a Special Flood Hazard Area. Buffer and landscaping requirements must meet Article 8, Landscaping and Buffering and will be reviewed on the Major Site Development Plan. The development is proposed to be serviced by a county water service line that runs along US Hwy 117. The site will also be served by an on-site septic area, subject to review and approval by Pender County Environmental Health.

**Evaluation:**

**A) Existing Zoning in Area:**

The property lies within an OI, Office & Institutional District. The properties surrounding the proposed project are all zoned RA, Rural Agricultural District.

**B) Existing Land Use in Area:**

The site is currently vacant and is immediately surrounded by low density residential and agricultural/forestry uses.

**D) 2010 Comprehensive Land Use Plan:**

Suburban Growth: The Suburban Growth land use classification identifies those areas of Pender County where significant residential growth is expected to occur within the planning horizon. Uses that would typically be allowed in Suburban Growth areas include medium-high density residential; limited non-residential uses – commercial, office, or public/institutional – meeting locational criteria. Locational criteria for non-residential uses include frontage and access to a major State highway or secondary road, location at a major intersection, proximity to similar uses, and spatial separation from non-compatible uses such as residential development. Based off of the project’s locational criteria, and low density residential uses, the request is supported by the Comprehensive Plan.

The following goals and policies support this request:

- a. Growth Management Policy 1A.1.2: Encourage development in areas where the necessary infrastructure – roads, water, sewer, and schools - are available, planned or can be most cost effectively provided and extended to serve existing and future development.
- b. Growth Management Policy 1A.1.3: The County shall actively direct growth towards suitable land areas and away from fragile natural resource areas, conservation areas, and hazardous areas.

**E) Summary & Staff Recommendation:**

The proposal consists of a two (2) phased commercial development consisting of a religious organization and activity center 7.42 acres. The request complies with the criteria set forth in Section 3.5.4 of the Unified Development Ordinance. The request is consistent with the 2010 Comprehensive Land Use Plan; therefore, Planning Staff recommends conditional approval based on Major Site Development plan items being met as well as the consideration of the Technical Review Committee (TRC) and Planning Board comments.

Board Action for Master Development Plan Review:

**Motion:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Seconded** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Denied:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Unanimous** \_\_\_\_\_

Williams: \_\_\_\_ McClammy: \_\_\_\_ Baker: \_\_\_\_ Boney: \_\_\_\_ Edens: \_\_\_\_ Marshburn: \_\_\_\_ Nalee: \_\_\_\_

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**TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (TRC) RESPONSES:****Cape Fear Council of Governments RPO**

- *The proposal should have a minimal impact on traffic volumes, which the draft CTP predicts to be well below capacity in both 2010 estimates and 2040 projections.*
- *This segment is not identified as having a high frequency of crashes according to the draft CTP.*

**Four County Electric Company**

*No response*

**NC DENR Division of Coastal Management**

*No comment*

**NC DENR Division of Forestry**

*No response*

**NC DENR Division of Land Resources**

*No response*

**NC DENR Division of Waste Management**

*No response*

**NC DENR Division of Water Quality**

*A stormwater permit application was received on March 24 and is currently under review.*

**NC DOT Division of Highways**

*Free Will Gospel Church has submitted for a driveway permit.*

**NC DOT Transportation Planning Branch**

*No response*

**NC Office of State Archaeology**

*No response*

**NC Wildlife Resources Commission**

*No response*

**Pender County Building Inspections**

*No response*

**Pender County Emergency Management**

*No response*

**Pender County Environmental Health**

*They need to submit an application for an IP to start. We need to know how many seats and if they are going to have a kitchen. It is recommended that they hire a consultant.*

**Pender County Fire Marshal**

*No response*

**Pender County Parks and Recreation**

*No response*

**Pender County Public Library**

*No response*

**Pender County Public Utilities**

*No response*

**Pender County Schools**

*No response*

**Pender County Sheriff's Department**

*No response*

**Pender County Soil and Water Conservation District**

*Soil & Water sees no problem with this request.*

**Progress Energy Corporation**

*No response*

**US Army Corps of Engineers**

*No response*

**Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization**

*No comment*