



Natural Lands

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MEMO

TO: Julie Slavet, Executive Director
Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership

FROM: Richard M. Tralies, RLA
Senior Director of Landscape Planning

CC:

DATE: January 7, 2022

RE: 222 Church Road Subdivision - Plan Review

Dear Ms. Slavet,

I have reviewed the Preliminary Subdivision and Land Development Plan, as well as the appropriate accessory documents, including wetland and soil reports, and review letters from Cheltenham Township and Montgomery County staff. The review was performed at the request of the Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership, and therefore, was focused on elements which could affect water quality and quantity.

I offer the following comments, grouped by topic.

1. Replacement Trees

The landscape plan does not include a calculation for required replacement trees, as noted by both the Cheltenham Township and Montgomery County staff review letters. Due to the important role that trees play in protecting, cleaning and recharging ground, surface and subsurface waters, we strongly recommend that the applicants provide all required replacement trees. Additionally, we recommend these trees be planted near the wetlands to provide additional buffering and filtering to protect this important habitat.

2. Landscape Details

- a. Landscape architects, arborists, and nursery professionals generally agree that tree wraps should not be left on trunks for long periods of time. They may be used to protect trees during transportation but should be removed immediately upon planting. We recommend the landscape details be revised to indicate that wraps must be removed.
- b. The applicant proposes mostly native plant species, which better support our native ecosystems, including wetland and aquatic ecosystems. However, a few non-native species have been proposed. We recommend the following substitutions:

- i. Littleleaf Linden (*Tilia cordata*) can be replaced with American Linden (*Tilia americana*)
 - ii. Southern Bayberry (*Myrica cerifera*) can be replaced with Northern Bayberry (*Myrica pennsylvanica*)
- c. The applicant proposes soil amendments for every plant. However, native plants are typically well suited to native soils. Amendments can cause the plants to girdle themselves, as roots tend to stay in the amended, nutrient rich soil, rather than spreading outwards as they should. We recommend that the soil amendments be removed from the plans to protect the trees long term health.

3. Paving

The plans propose a fully paved cul-de-sac with a radius of 50'. We believe the cul-de-sac could be reduced in size, down to a 45' or even a 40' radius. This would eliminate some impervious surface. A cul-de-sac with a radius of 50' has an area of 7,853 sf. A cul-de-sac with a radius of 40' has an area of 5,026 sf. Reducing the radius could eliminate approximately 2,800 square feet of impervious surface. For reference, that's the equivalent of 14 typical parking spaces.

4. Stormwater Management

The post construction stormwater management report refers to construction of a forebay and multiple BMP's. We would support a plan with BMP's spread throughout the site, as the BMP's would infiltrate stormwater throughout the site. However, the post construction stormwater management plan (PDF Sheet 17, Record Plan 3 of 3) appears to show stormwater being captured from the roofs and roads and piped across the site to a single large detention basin. The plans do not appear to show multiple BMPs. We would strongly suggest redirecting roof drains and patio runoff into individual, on-lot rain gardens, seepage pits, vegetated swales or other BMP's.

5. Maintenance

The plans state that the basin maintenance will be the responsibility of the lot owners/permittees. The notes state that the basin should be mowed twice annually. However, this oversimplifies the requirements. For instance, in its first growing season, the basin vegetation should only be mowed to a height of 8", and this is only after it reaches 18-24". Therefore, we strongly recommend that the plans be revised to clarify the maintenance suggestions per Ernst Seeds' Stormwater Management Planting Guide, found on their website here: <https://www.ernstseed.com/resources/planting-guides/stormwater-management-planting-guide/>. Additionally, the guide, and other resources should be provided to the homeowners, or whoever is responsible for maintenance, to ensure that the basin is properly maintained and the planted wet meadow does not fail.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at the phone number above (ext. 262) or at rtalies@natlands.org. Thank you for the opportunity to review this plan.

Sincerely,



Richard M. Tralies, PLA
Sr. Director of Landscape Planning, Natural Lands