

Town of East Lyme Zoning Commission  
108 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Niantic, CT 06357

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East Lyme, CT 06333

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Members of the Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to express in writing my concerns regarding the proposed Harvest Christian Church development. As you are aware after speaking at the public forum, several committee members asked for my public safety concerns to be formally addressed and conveyed to the Town and Fire Marshal.

I have complete faith in the Office of the Fire Marshal that no certificate of occupancy (CO) would be issued without the building up to current fire code. Prior to the CO and approval, I do have concerns that could be addressed in the plan review phases and/or require changes to the current parking area and single entrance and egress driveway.

The construction of an 8,000-foot place of assembly without a sprinkler system may very well be within the fire code and is the choice of the occupant based on cost saving measures. Yet, several factors in addition to the lack of sprinklers may lead to a delay in extinguishment, safety of occupants and responders and excessive property damage.

Entrance and egress are limited to one single driveway located at the end of a dead-end road. Fire apparatus, ambulances and responders will have to navigate the single access point while civilian vehicles are exiting. While this means of egress and exit has been reviewed by wetlands and zoning and is well within the rules, the issue of water supply is the wild card that isn't being discussed. Without a fire sprinkler system, extinguishment will be delayed until the arrival of the fire department. Response times and staffing will vary due to the combination career/ volunteer staffing. The closest hydrant, as described in the meeting, is not adjacent or near the proposed building. It is located off the proposed access roadway. The secondary hydrant located on North Bridebrook Rd is not within the reach of a simple hose lay and exceeds the carrying capacity of fire apparatus. I foresee an issue of having to use the hydrant off the access road and the large diameter supply hose being across the only means of entrance and egress for fire apparatus and civilian departure.

The proposed roadway and parking area is approved for 72 parking spaces. Based on the occupancy capacity of the sanctuary and the capacity of the 1,600 square foot assembly hall it is very well possible the entire parking lot will be at capacity and additional parking on the roadway. This leads to the challenge to properly park, position and maneuver fire apparatus. Flanders Fire Department is the primary responding agency to the proposed site. Stated on their website, the primary response apparatus for commercial building fire is B-25. B-25 is a 2015 quint ladder tower. A quint, in layman's terms, has firehose, a pump and a large aerial ladder. The truck is 48 feet long and requires 18 feet total side to side to deploy the aerial outriggers (like a crane). The truck has an inherent wide turning radius. The truck has the largest pump capacity in its fleet according to the website but only carries 300 gallons of water. It will require hydrant water or tanker water for an 8000 sq building. The maneuverability, placement and deployment in a crowded parking lot is very challenging and made worse by a limited area to turn and/or reverse direction. Now pair that with a large hose line in the road and arriving apparatus, to include a second aerial truck, it is potentially hindering fireground operations and endangering safety. The roadway and parking area are of great concern. The current plans do not provide adequate room to maneuver, position and turn at an occupancy with an at capacity parking area and a limited egress pathway.

While it may not be fair to assume the worst-case scenario, fire protection and response should be geared toward the worst possible scenario to have the best possible outcome.

Sincerely,

Jason Erban