STAFF ANALYSIS

STAFF PERSON:	Ben Loppacker, Planner I
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:	December 2, 2026
PROJECT:	SE-2026-00015 Living Earth Sanctuary
PARCEL IDs:	10100-00-00-02000, 10100-00-00-020C0, 10100-00-00-01900

Proposed special exceptions to parking lot design standards in County Code §18-4.12.15 (a), §18-4.12.15 (c) and §18-4.12.15 (g).

PROPOSAL

The applicant requests a special exception to modify parking lot design standards found in County Code § 18-4.12.15, including the surface materials, curb and gutter requirements, and the proposed maximum slope in the parking lots and access aisles. County Code § 18-4.12.2(c) authorizes the Board of Supervisors to grant parking lot modifications and waivers. These requests are associated with an initial site plan under review for a (SDP-2026-00052) camp and are primarily related to the "Welcome Area" and "Staff Residence Area" as depicted on the proposed plan . Details of the applicant's request are provided in Attachment B and the requests include:

1. County Code § 18-4.12.15(a): Allow gravel, rather than asphalt, for parking lot surface materials.
2. County Code § 18-4.12.15(c): Allow parking lot and access aisle grades up to 7%.
3. County Code § 18-4.12.15(g): Waive curb and gutter requirements and allow earthen channels.

County Code § 18-4.12.2(c) allows the Board of Supervisors to grant a modification or a waiver of the design requirements in County Code § 18-4.12.15 if the Board finds that the public health, safety, or welfare would be equally or better served by the modification or waiver and that the modification or waiver would not otherwise be contrary to the purpose and intent of the County's Zoning Ordinance. Furthermore, County Code § 18-4.12.2(2) provides that the Board of Supervisors may modify or waive a design requirement of County Code § 18-4.12.15 only after consultation with the County Engineer, who shall advise the zoning administrator whether the proposed waiver or modification would equally or better serve the public, health, safety or welfare.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The property is 287.13 acres and is zoned Rural Areas (RA) and fronts on Red Hill Rd. A Special Use Permit (SP202400022) and Special Exception for a Critical Slopes Waiver (SE202400031) were approved on June 4, 2025 to allow a campground with associated parking and improvements. An initial site plan (SDP-2026-00052) is currently under review to allow development of the site for the camp.

ANALYSIS OF SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST

Under County Code § 18-33.9 (A), factors, standards, criteria, and findings, however denominated, in the applicable sections of the Zoning Ordinance, are to be considered in special exception applications. An analysis of the waiver against these criteria is set forth below:

1. County Code § 18-4.12.15(a); Allow gravel, rather than asphalt, for parking lot surface materials

Under County Code § 18-4.12.15(a), All parking areas consisting of four or more spaces shall be surfaced. The surface materials for parking areas and access aisles shall be subject to review and approval by the county engineer, based upon the intensity of usage and Virginia Department of Transportation pavement design guidelines and specifications. The county engineer may approve the use of alternative surfaces deemed equivalent in regard to strength,

durability, sustainability and long term maintenance for the intensity of the use.

Planning, Engineering and Zoning staff have reviewed this request and find that modifying the surface materials requirements would not have an impact on the public health, safety, or welfare. The applicant has proposed a combination of gravel, asphalt, and permeable pavers based on expected usage and parking needs on site. This includes grass overflow parking for temporary or event conditions. Staff believes this flexibility allows for design in keeping with rural character, while not compromising public, health, and safety with parking lot design. Engineering staff have no objection with conditions as recommended for segments of the access road to be paved.

2. **County Code § 18-4.12.15(c): Allow parking lot and access aisle grades up to 7%.**

Under County Code § 18-4.12.15(c), the maximum grade for parking spaces, loading spaces, and access aisles abutting parking or loading spaces shall not exceed five percent in any direction. The applicant has proposed grade increases of up to 7% in limited areas of the access aisles, responding to topography of the rural property.

Planning, Engineering and Zoning staff have reviewed this request and find that modifying the maximum grade requirements would not have an impact on the public health, safety, or welfare. Engineering staff have requested one design change, limit parking to a maximum 7% grade on Final Site Plan approval.

3. **County Code § 18-4.12.15(g): Waive curb and gutter requirements and allow earthen channels.**

Under County Code § 18-4.12.15(g), curbs shall be established at the edges of parking areas or access aisles in the following circumstances: (1) in all commercial or institutional developments requiring eight or more parking spaces; (2) in all multi-family dwelling and townhouse developments requiring eight or more spaces; (3) where necessary to control or direct stormwater runoff; (4) where a sidewalk is located closer than four feet from the edge of an access aisle; and (5) where necessary to contain vehicular traffic to protect pedestrians and/or property. Gutters shall be required where necessary to control or direct stormwater runoff. The proposed development is an institutional use (religious assembly), and more than eight parking spaces are proposed.

Planning, Engineering and Zoning staff have reviewed this request and find that waiving the curb requirements would not have an impact on the public health, safety, or welfare. Engineering staff have no objection to not using curb and gutter on for this project, however, the WPO Plan must account for this and be approved before final site plan approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board adopt the attached Resolution (Attachment C) to approve all three special exceptions with conditions:

1. The maximum grade in parking areas must not exceed 7%.
2. The first 100 feet of travelway into the site from Red Hill Road must be paved. Portions of the travelway adjacent to the proposed permeable spaces, as shown on Sheet C2.1, must also be paved if required by the County Engineer.