

ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

Project Name: SP-2025-00005 Crozet Fellowship Church	Staff: J.T. Newberry, Senior Planner II
Planning Commission Hearing: March 24, 2026	Board of Supervisors Public Hearing: To be scheduled
Owner: Crozet Fellowship Church	Applicant: John Healy (Pastor of Crozet Fellowship Church); Chuck Rapp (Collins Engineering)
Acreage: 16.67 acres (combined)	Special Use Permit: Section 18-10.2.2 (35) Religious assembly use with assembly of more than 200 persons.
TMP: 05500-00-00-019E0, 05500-00-00-019F0, and 05500-00-00-019G0 Location: 470 Twinkling Springs Road, Crozet, VA 22932	By-right use: Rural Areas (RA). Allows agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses as well as residential uses (maximum density of 0.5 unit/acre in development lots).
Magisterial District: White Hall	Conditions: Yes EC: Yes
Proposal: Special use permit (SP) request for religious assembly use with assembly of a maximum of 400 persons.	Comp. Plan Designation: Rural Area – preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources; residential (0.5 unit/acre in development lots) in Rural Area 3 of the Comprehensive Plan.
Character of Property: The property is mostly wooded and contains an existing religious assembly use. Approximately half of the property is occupied by areas of Critical Slopes and Water Protection Ordinance Stream Buffer.	Use of Surrounding Properties: Single-family residences and other Rural Areas uses, including agriculture.
Positive Aspects: 1. The use is consistent with the review criteria for special use permits contained in the Zoning Ordinance, including no detrimental impacts to adjoining properties are anticipated. 2. Site development is focused on existing, already-disturbed open areas of the site.	Concerns: 1. No concerns have been identified at this time.
Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of SP-2025-00005 Crozet Fellowship Church with conditions.	

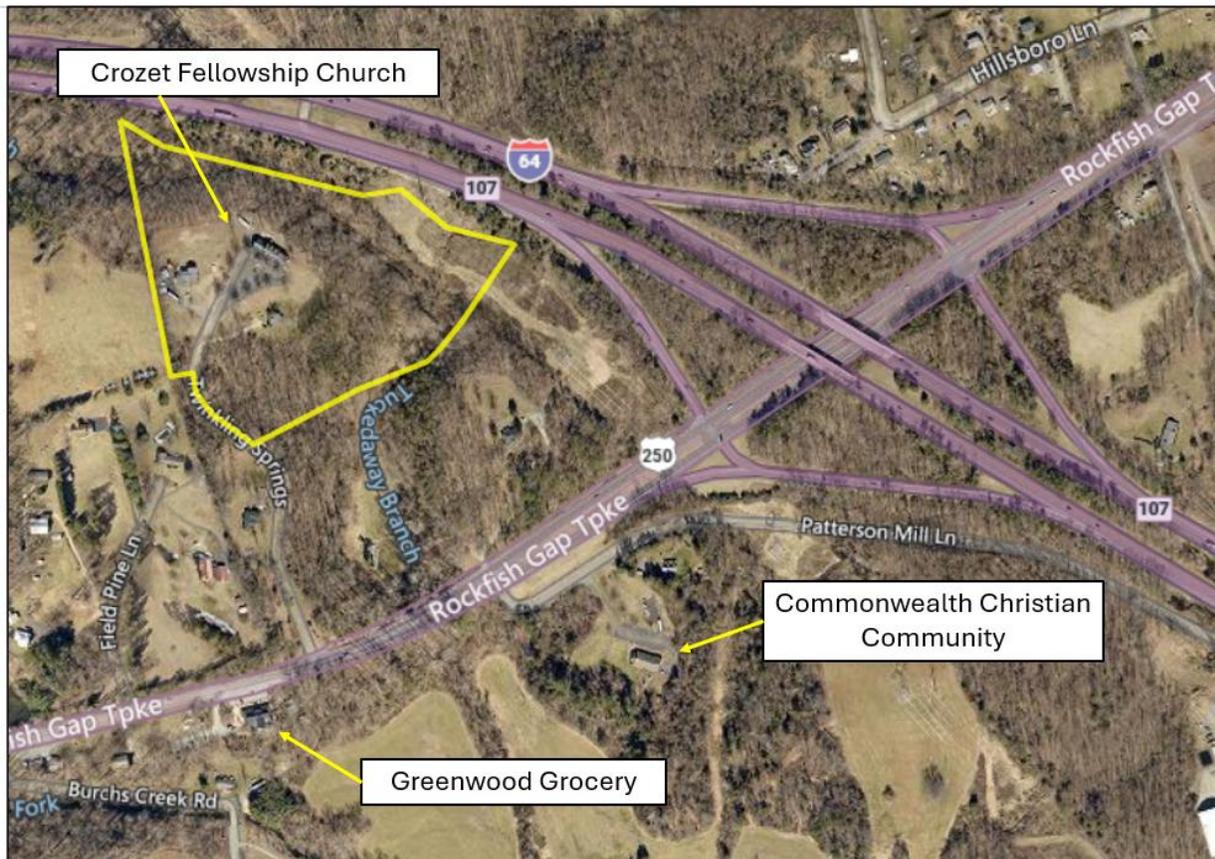
STAFF PERSON:
PLANNING COMMISSION:
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

J.T. Newberry, Senior Planner II
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CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The project site is comprised of three properties that total approximately 16.67 acres and are located at the end of Twinkling Springs Road (see Attachment 1). This area is approximately 0.2 miles west of the Interstate I-64 and Route 250 W interchange at exit 107 in Crozet. The project site is mostly wooded with mature trees and surrounded on the northern and eastern sides by a stream (Tuckedaway Branch). Approximately half of the project site is occupied by Water Protection Ordinance (WPO) buffer or critical slopes (areas with a slope of 25% or greater). The entirety of the rear boundary is bordered by right-of-way for Interstate 64.

The surrounding area has a mixture of uses, including agricultural, single-family residential, commercial (Greenwood Grocery), and other religious assembly use (Commonwealth Christian Community). Adjacent properties are both zoned and designated in the Comprehensive Plan as Rural Areas. The area map below displays the proximity of these features to the proposed project site.



PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY

There are multiple special use permits associated with the subject properties:

- SP197300261, approved July 11, 1973, granted permission for a country store, with conditions. These conditions were amended on November 15, 1973.

- SP197600031, approved July 7, 1976, amended the previous special use permit to allow for additional signage.
- SP200200074, approved April 2, 2003, to change the use from a country store to a church, subject to conditions that allowed an area of assembly of up to 93 seats.
- SDP200400007, approved a site plan on March 30, 2004 for the existing church site.

On December 18, 2019, ZTA201900003 amended the Zoning Ordinance to allow religious assembly uses with assembly of not more than 200 persons as a by-right use in the Rural Areas. Crozet Fellowship Church has remained under the 200-person limit but is growing and seeking approval for assembly of greater than 200 persons.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

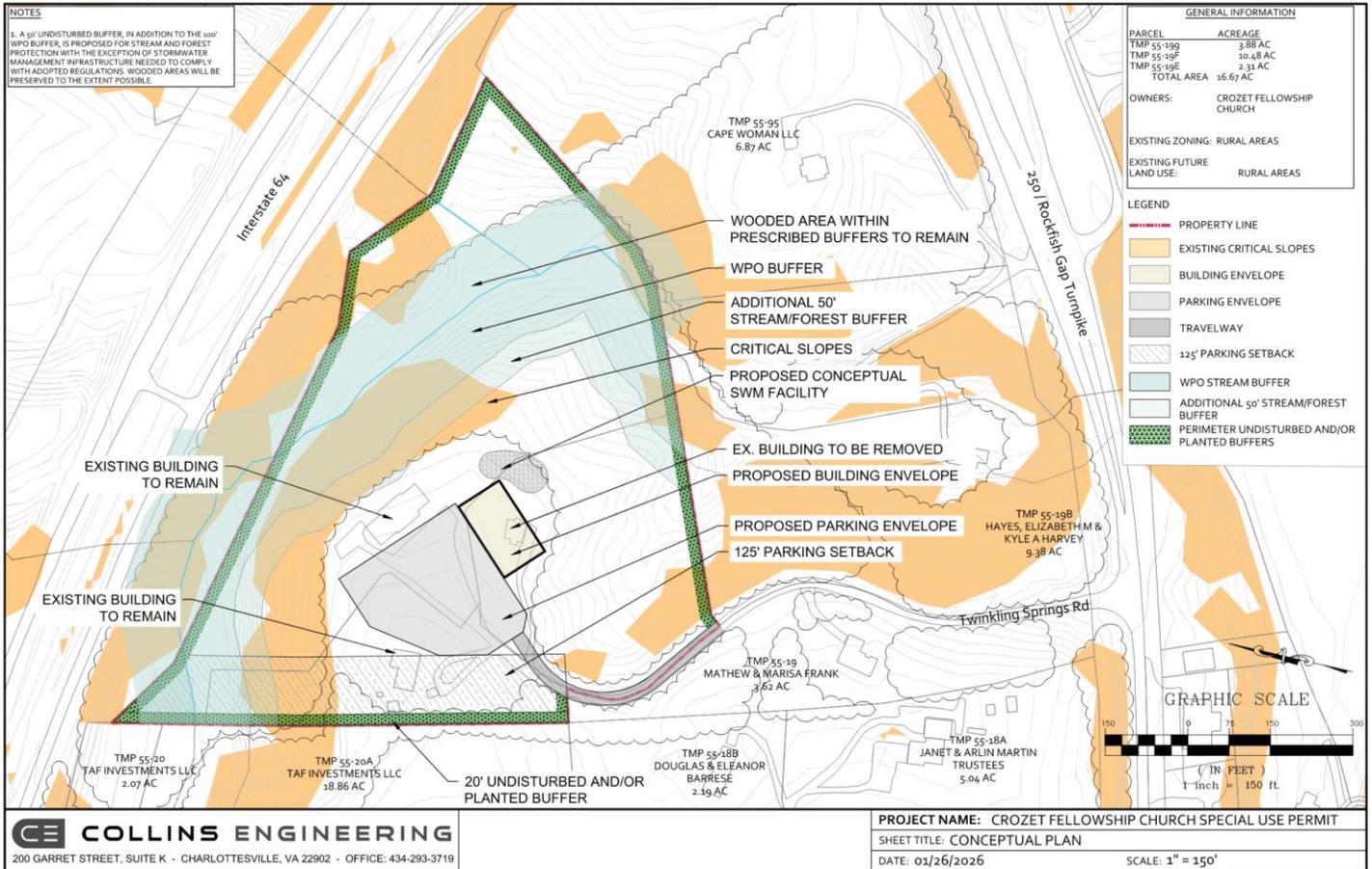
The special use permit is requested to allow assembly of up to 400 persons. Membership has steadily grown since Crozet Fellowship Church purchased the properties in 2023. The proposed improvements include a new one-story sanctuary building (not to exceed 10,000 square feet and 35 feet in height), associated parking, and new stormwater management facilities.

The existing membership is currently served by approximately 50 parking spaces on the site. The proposed parking area would provide between 120-150 total parking spaces as well as connecting sidewalks.

The applicant’s narrative provides an illustration of the proposed building and parking area improvements and a conceptual location for stormwater management facilities:



The applicant's conceptual plan shows the proposed building and parking envelopes overlaid on the existing site's improvements, as well as other features of the site, including critical resources and stream buffers.



Attachment 4: Concept Plan provided by the Applicant

COMMUNITY MEETING/PUBLIC INPUT

The required community meeting was held at the existing Crozet Fellowship Church site on Thursday, December 11, 2025 at 6:00pm. Staff presented an overview of the review process and the applicant shared details regarding the proposal. Several attendees were affiliated with the church and one adjoining neighbor was also present. Primary themes from the discussion included concerns about the cumulative impacts of increasing development and activity in the area, especially regarding noise and special events.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST:

Special Use Permits are evaluated under reasonable standards, based on zoning principles which include the proposal's compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. Any impacts caused by the proposal may be addressed through conditions which must be reasonably related and roughly proportional to the impacts.

Section 33.8(A) states that the Commission, in making its recommendation, shall consider the following factors:

- 1. No substantial detriment. Whether the proposed special use will be a substantial detriment to adjacent parcels.**

There are several characteristics of the applicant’s conceptual plan that ensure the proposed special use will not be a substantial detriment to adjacent parcels.

First, the overall development approach focuses site development on existing, already-disturbed open areas of the site, which not only limits impacts to the site’s critical resources and downstream water quality, but it also limits impacts to adjacent parcels.

In addition, the applicant’s conceptual plan proposes additional buffering across much of the site. There’s an additional 50’ buffer to the existing 100’ Water Protection Ordinance buffer on Tuckedaway Branch. This waterway flows across the northern and eastern edge of the property, which separates it from adjoining residential uses. There’s also a 20’ undisturbed and/or planted buffer between the western edge of the site and the adjoining agricultural use. A 20’ buffer is consistent with what would be required for a commercial site developing adjacent to residential or rural property.

Finally, the application also enhances stormwater management on the site. During the site plan process, the proposed improvements will need to adhere to the County’s stormwater management requirements, addressing water quantity and quality associated with any developed areas. The applicant’s narrative states that these standards will be met through “a combination of bio-retention facilities, water quality swales, grass retention areas, and land preservation.” These facilities will mitigate potential impacts related to the sensitive riparian ecosystem on the property.

Both the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Albemarle County Transportation staff have reviewed this proposal and do not have concerns regarding transportation.

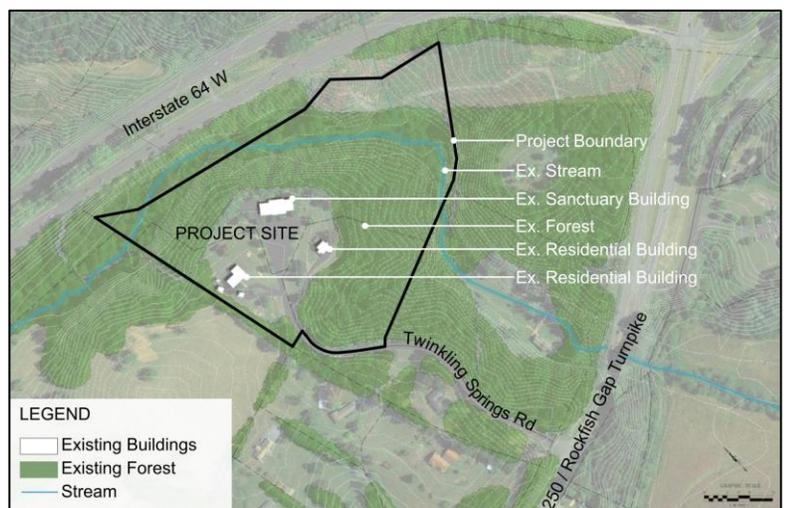
This proposal is not expected to be a substantial detriment to adjacent parcels with the conditions proposed by staff.

2. Character of the nearby area is unchanged. Whether the character of the adjacent parcels and the nearby area will be changed by the proposed special use.

Staff does not believe the proposal will change the character of adjacent parcels or the nearby area.

The project site is approximately 750 feet away from the intersection of Twinkling Springs Road and Route 250 W, and approximately 40 feet higher in elevation than Route 250 W. None of the existing structures within the project site are visible from Route 250 W and the proposed sanctuary building is expected to have limited visibility from the Entrance Corridor.

The existing conditions maps helps illustrate the anticipated limited visibility of the improvements and the proximity of the project site to the nearby area.



Existing Conditions Map provided by the Applicant.

3. Harmony. Whether the proposed special use will be harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter,

Section 10 of the Zoning Ordinance outlines the purpose of Rural Areas (RA) zoning:

This district hereafter referred to as RA is hereby created and may hereafter be established by amendment of the zoning map for the following purposes:

- *Preservation of agricultural and forestal lands and activities;*
- *Water supply protection;*
- *Limited service delivery to the rural areas; and*
- *Conservation of natural, scenic, and historic resources.*

Religious assembly uses with assembly of more than 200 persons are generally considered a use by special use permit that may be acceptable in the Rural Areas (RA) zoning district. The special use permit process evaluates impacts and whether a use is appropriate at a specific location in the Rural Area and whether it is in harmony with the RA district.

In this case, the proposal does not affect agricultural activities and conserves the majority of the parcel, which is in harmony. Service delivery increases would be largely relate to occasional public-safety services, in the event of emergencies.

with the uses permitted by right in the district,

The uses permitted by right in the Rural Areas zoning district support agriculture, forestry, and land conservation, as well as permit residential uses. The expanded religious assembly use may generate impacts at peak times that are temporarily more intense than by-right uses, but these times are expected to be limited and intermittent. The proposal is not expected to negatively impact adjacent uses. Overall, the proposal is in harmony with by-right uses permitted in the district.

with the regulations provided in Section 5 as applicable,

Section 5.1.64 provides supplemental regulations that are applicable to all religious assembly uses in the Rural Areas zoning district regardless of the size of assembly. These regulations are in addition to all other requirements of County Code and all other applicable laws. The proposed expansion will be subject to the regulations in Section 5.1.64 listed below.

Each religious assembly use authorized below shall be subject to the following:

- a. *Notice.* The religious assembly shall provide written notice to the owner of each abutting lot under different ownership than the lot on which the proposed use would be located. The notice shall identify the proposed type, size, and frequency of events and assemblies, and provide the name and telephone number of a contact person who will be on-site at the religious assembly use. The notice shall be mailed at least ten days prior to the issuance of a building permit.
- b. *Sound from outdoor amplified music.* Sound generated by outdoor amplified music shall be subject to the following:
 1. *Maximum sound level.* Sound generated by outdoor amplified music shall not exceed the applicable maximum sound levels in [section 4.18.04](#).

2. *Times of day when outdoor amplified music prohibited.* Sound generated by outdoor amplified music is prohibited between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. the following morning.

c. *Yards.* Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the following minimum front, side, and rear yard requirements shall apply to any event or activity:

1. *Structures used for religious assembly.* The minimum yards for structures used religious assembly shall be as follows:

a. *New permanent structures and temporary structures.* The minimum front, side, and rear yard requirements in [section 10.4](#) shall apply to all permanent and temporary structures used for religious assembly.

b. *Existing permanent structures.* If an existing permanent structure does not satisfy any minimum yard requirement under subsection (c)(1)(a), the minimum yard required shall be the distance between the existing permanent structure and the street, road, access easement, or lot line on December 18, 2019, and that distance shall not be thereafter reduced. An enlargement or expansion of the structure shall be no closer to a street, road, access easement or lot line than the existing structure.

2. *Parking areas.* The minimum front, side, and rear yards for parking areas shall be 125 feet from any abutting lot not under the same ownership as the religious assembly use.

d. *Expansions to existing nonconforming religious uses.* Notwithstanding the provisions of [section 6.2\(A\)](#), minor expansions to existing nonconforming religious assembly uses shall be permitted by right. These expansions are limited to picnic shelters, storage, office space, recreational equipment, and other similar additions or accessory structures that are determined by the Zoning Administrator to not increase the capacity of the nonconforming religious assembly use. Any new structure shall comply with the provisions of section 5.1.64(c).

The applicant will comply with all applicable supplemental regulations in Section 5.1.64. The proposed structures and parking areas shown on the concept plan meet the applicable setbacks. The applicant will provide notice to adjacent property owners when applying for their building permit(s) and do not intend to have outdoor amplified music. In the case of an event on the property, any outdoor amplified music would comply the applicable maximum sound levels in [Section 4.18.04](#).

and with the public health, safety, and general welfare.

The public health, safety, and general welfare of the community are protected throughout the special use permit process, which assures that the proposed expansion is appropriate in the location requested.

Transportation

Twinkling Springs Road is an approximately 18-foot wide private roadway that provides the ingress/egress from Rockfish Gap Turnpike (Rt. 250) to the project site. It is paved with asphalt and has a commercial entrance approximately 85' in width. There is a right-turn taper for vehicles

to make safe right-turn movements off of Route 250 W and adequate site distance. In addition to the existing church, Twinkling Springs Road serves one single-family dwelling.

If the special use permit is approved, the use cannot commence without the appropriate site development plan, building permits, and zoning clearances. These processes will ensure that all State and County regulations, special use permit conditions, and all necessary building and fire inspections have been approved. This will include final approval of well and septic by the Health Department.

4. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Whether the proposed special use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The update to the Comprehensive Plan, AC44, was adopted in October 2025 with an implementation date of January 1, 2026. This application was accepted prior to the implementation date and therefore is being reviewed against the County's 2015 Comprehensive Plan.

The Rural Area Chapter ([Chapter 7](#)) of the Comprehensive Plan designates the subject property for this proposal for Rural Area land uses. The intent of the Rural Area designation is to allow uses that preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic, and scenic resources.

The following recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan are relevant to this site:

- Chapter 7 Rural Areas, Objective 2: Protect and preserve natural resources, which include mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, streams, groundwater, and retain continuous and unfragmented land for agriculture, forestry, biodiversity, and natural resource protection.
- Rural citizens supported by community meeting places, a basic level of services, and rural organizations and other cultural institutions at traditional rural scales, with opportunities to take part in community life and decisions.

The retention of forested landcover areas as part of the proposed use is consistent with Objective 2, “[p]rotect and preserve natural resources, which include mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, streams, groundwater, and continuous and unfragmented land for agriculture, forestry, biodiversity and natural resource protection.” The proposed building and parking envelope is primarily within already disturbed areas of the site.

SUMMARY

Staff have identified the following positive aspects with this request:

1. The use is consistent with the review criteria for special use permits contained in the Zoning Ordinance, including no detrimental impacts to adjoining properties are anticipated.
2. Site development is focused on existing, already-disturbed open areas of the site.

Staff have identified the following concerns with this request:

1. No concerns have been identified at this time.

RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the findings contained in this staff report, staff recommends approval of SP-2025-00005 Crozet Fellowship Church with conditions.

Staff is providing the following draft conditions for consideration:

1. Development of the use must be in general accord with the conceptual plan named, "Crozet Fellowship Church Special Use Permit" drawn by Collins Engineering dated January 26, 2026. To be in general accord with the Conceptual Plan, development must reflect the following major elements essential to the design of the development:
 - a. Location of proposed building and parking envelopes;
 - b. Maintenance of the wooded areas within the WPO buffer, along with an additional 50 foot stream/forest buffer;

Minor modifications to the plan that do not conflict with the elements above may be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

2. A 20-foot use buffer in accordance with Section 18-21.7(c) must be established and maintained along the property boundaries. The use buffer area may not be disturbed other than to install screening or landscaping screening.
3. The maximum religious assembly size must not exceed 400 persons.

POSSIBLE PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS:

- A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:

I moved to recommend approval of SP-2025-0005 Crozet Fellowship Church with the conditions provided by staff for the reasons stated in the staff report.

- B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:

I move to recommend denial of SP-2025-0005 Crozet Fellowship Church for the reasons stated in the staff report. *Should a commissioner motion to recommend denial, he or she should state the reason(s) for recommending denial.*

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attach 1 – [SP-2025-00005 Crozet Fellowship Church – Existing Conditions Map](#)
Attach 2 – [SP-2025-00005 Crozet Fellowship Church – Zoning Map](#)
Attach 3 – [SP-2025-00005 Crozet Fellowship Church – Applicant Narrative](#)
Attach 4 – [SP-2025-00005 Crozet Fellowship Church – Applicant Conceptual Plan](#)