

**RESOLUTION OF THE FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP  
(SOMERSET COUNTY)  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

**RESOLUTION TO OPPOSE** the proposal by St. Stephens Mar Thoma Church to build a large (14,500 sq. ft) Sanctuary/Multipurpose Room on Grouser Road, Block 59.01, Lot 10.02, and to recommend preserving this lot as open space.

**WHEREAS**, the primary objective of the Environmental Commission is to advise the Township Council, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment and Board of Health on environmental issues, including preserving and protecting the natural resources of the Township, as well as the impact of proposed developments within the Township; and

**WHEREAS**, the lot in question is an approximately ten (10) acre parcel, which is now in farmland assessment, located within 100 yards of a stream that feeds directly into the D&R Canal and bordered to the north by the Hutcheson Memorial Forest, an area of high environmental significance in Franklin Township that is particularly valuable for its stand of ancient trees and for residents of the Township who value wildlife and the environment; and

**WHEREAS**, it is likely that vastly increased traffic, lighting, and runoff (currently slated for diversion into the existing bio-retention basin fronting Van Cleef Road, which is also part of the Hutcheson Memorial Forest and maintained and studied by Rutgers University), could only have negative affects on the local environment, and on the citizens of Franklin who reside there and/or otherwise enjoy this unique environmental resource in the heart of our Township; and

**WHEREAS**, the surrounding residents of Grouser Road rely on wells and septic systems that may be negatively affected by the strain imposed on the local hydrology by the proposed septic system which underestimates the size and volume of sanitary waste that will be produced by the proposed Sanctuary/Multipurpose Room; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposal underestimates the amount of parking and associated impervious surface that will be required for the facility, which would in turn increase runoff, and may negatively affect neighboring properties that already are encumbered by storm water management issues as well as the negative effect it would have on nearby residential wells and septic systems; and

**WHEREAS**, the plan to build a large complex at this location is antithetical to the Township's efforts to preserve and enhance the environment in an area located on one of the Township's Scenic Corridor Roads; and

**WHEREAS**, it is further our understanding that the Franklin Township Open Space Advisory Committee has voted to recommend that the Township act to preserve the site of the proposed development; and

**WHEREAS**, the concept plan does not take these environmental qualities that limit the appropriateness of development into account; and

**WHEREAS**, the Environmental Commission believes that the developer's request for variances regarding lot area and buffering requirements indicates a lack of regard for the environmental impacts of their development;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that** the Environmental Commission of the Township of Franklin, Somerset County, State of New Jersey, opposes the proposal by St. Stephens Mar Thoma Church to build a large (14,500 sq. ft) Sanctuary/Multipurpose Room on Block 59.01, Lot 10.02, on Grouser Road. The Environmental Commission recommends that the Zoning Board of Adjustment deny the requested variances for Lot Area and Buffering. The Environmental Commission further recommends preserving this environmentally sensitive area as open space.

**Adopted June 16, 2008 by vote of the Environmental Commission.**

The listed members voted in favor of this resolution. Dr. Theodore Chase, Dianne Pydeski and John Clyde were absent at the time of the vote.

Arnold Vernick, Chair  
Arnold Schmidt, Vice Chair  
Barbara Beringer  
David Triggs  
John Walker  
Ernesto Roman