



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** October 9, 2003  
**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board  
**VIA:** John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *JAC*  
**FROM:** Callum Murray, 301-495-4733, Potomac Team Leader *CM*  
Community-Based Planning Division

**CASE NUMBER:** MR-03402-F&RS-1  
**REVIEW TYPE:** Mandatory Referral  
**PROJECT NAME:** Cabin John Volunteer Fire Department  
Station #30, Apparatus Bay and Station Expansion  
**REVIEW BASIS:** Article 28, Chapter 7-112 of Regional District Act  
**ZONE:** RE-2  
**LOCATION:** 9404 Falls Road, Potomac  
**MASTER PLAN:** Potomac Subregion  
**APPLICANT:** Cabin John Volunteer Fire Department

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**RECOMMENDATION:** APPROVAL with conditions.

1. The applicant must comply with the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services requirements for sedimentation/erosion control and stormwater management.
2. Minimum sizes for plant material specified on the Landscape and Tree Protection Plan shall be as follows: Picea Abies (7-8 feet), Magnolia Virginiana (7-8 feet), Viburnum Plicatum (3-4 feet), Prunus Laurocerasus (24-30 inches), Juniperus Chinensis (18-24 inch spread).
3. Screen patio area and confine vending machines to interior of fire station.
4. The applicant will erect a 6-foot board-on-board fence along the west property line.
5. Cut-off fixtures will be applied to exterior lights to reduce glare.
6. Damaged vehicles used for training exercises will be confined to the rear of the property and not visible from Falls Road.
7. Structures within the rear and side setbacks in the northwest quadrant will be removed.
8. Confine outside speaker equipment to the rear of the fire station.

## **BACKGROUND**

Four fire and rescue stations are presently located within the Potomac Subregion. Continued operation of all four stations plus the addition of a fifth is required to meet future fire, rescue and emergency medical service needs within the subregion. Cabin John Park Station 30 is located at 9404 Falls Road, about 0.8 miles south of the intersection of Falls and River Roads. The station opened in 1974, is the smallest fire station in the County, and requires extensive renovation and expansion to meet present and future functional requirements. Renovation of this station is a high-priority project in the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (MCFRS) Capital Improvements Program, as recommended in the *Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services Master Plan*, as amended.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposal is to construct an apparatus bay to house a new elliptical water tanker and to expand the fire station to provide a conference room and allow separate male and female locker rooms, showers and rest rooms. The apparatus bay at 2,600 square feet is proposed as phase 1 and the building addition of 3,024 square feet as phase 2. Because phase 2 includes an additional storey, the actual additional building coverage of the second phase will be 555 square feet. The additions will add 5,624 square feet to the existing 5,492 square foot building, for a total of 11,116 square feet. An existing double garage of approximately 600 square feet in the northwest corner of the property will be removed prior to phase 1. The proposed net lot coverage is 11.9 percent out of a maximum of 35 percent, and all required setbacks are met. Between two and four volunteers and six to seven paid firefighters will be housed at Station 30.

The proposal for an elliptical water tanker arose from recommendations of the Water Supply Study Implementation Work Group (WSSIWG). WSSIWG determined that additional resources were necessary to guarantee sufficient water to much of the County rural area not served by public water and hydrants. The objectives of WSSIWG's recommendations are to save lives and to reduce property damage.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT**

The Station 30 property (Parcel N27) is 1.4728 acres and was subdivided in 1970. At that time, the Cabin John Volunteer Fire Department dedicated 25,845 square feet of Falls Road frontage for public use. The property is zoned RE-2 and is served by WSSC utilities. The property is almost rectangular in shape and is fairly level with a gently sloping berm in the northeast quadrant. It is of single story construction with a low profile, and two existing bays. Despite the existence of the bays, the structure is residential in character. The site has 12 parking spaces, four in front of the station and eight to the rear. The rear parking lot area is occasionally used for training exercises to simulate rescues from crashed vehicles. A communication tower at the station is maintained by Montgomery County Government's radio shop and is used for emergency radio communications by police and emergency services personnel.

Access is via a single driveway with a flashing light and acceleration/deceleration lanes on Falls Road. The station is exceptionally well screened from the north, west and south, and is located in an area consisting of bucolic single-family residential neighborhoods. Six-foot board-on-board fences line the south and west property boundaries. The fence on the south property line is in good condition, while the fence on the west boundary is in poor condition and has several gaps. The north property boundary is lined by a solid row of 26 Leyland Cypress trees at 6 to 10 inch diameter breast height (DBH) and approximately 20 feet in height.

The property is surrounded by the Great Falls Estates and Potomac Falls Estates subdivisions, zoned RE-2, on the west side of Falls Road, and the Potomac Ranch subdivision, zoned RE-2, and Williamsburg Gardens subdivision, zoned R-200, on the east.

## **COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

The Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department has consulted the board of the West Montgomery County Citizens Association regarding the proposed modifications. The immediately abutting property owner to the south is a member of that board and has in turn consulted immediate neighbors and informally transmitted their views to staff. The community supports the fire station but has various concerns of an aesthetic and operational nature. Staff has been informed that these concerns, many of which are addressed in the recommended conditions, will be transmitted formally in a letter prior to the Planning Board review of the mandatory referral.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Master Plan**

The approved and adopted Potomac Subregion Master Plan recommends that the Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department should be renovated. Should the existing site not accommodate an expanded/renovated facility, the station should be relocated to another site in the vicinity.

Staff believes that the mandatory referral proposal is a sensitive design which fits the expansion into the landscape in a non-intrusive fashion. The station will maintain its residential character and by setting the new bay back and into a berm, the visual impact will be minimized.

### **Transportation**

As a station for firefighting and emergency medical services, the hours of operation are twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The number of emergency calls per annum based on the last year is 1,800+, and the anticipated number of calls is in excess of 2,000.

The existing access from Falls Road with acceleration and deceleration lanes is safe and efficient and will not be affected by the proposed modifications under the subject mandatory referral. Transportation staff concludes that the surrounding roadway network has sufficient capacity to handle site generated traffic volumes and can accommodate the proposed facility.

## **Environment**

### **Forest Conservation**

The application is exempt from a Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) review and exempt from submission of a Forest Conservation Plan.

### **Stormwater Management**

Based on a review by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services staff, the stormwater management concept submitted as part of the mandatory referral is acceptable. The stormwater management concept consists of on-site water quality control and on-site recharge via two grass channels that receive drainage from the apparatus bay addition. On-site quality and recharge for the small building addition will be provided via sheet flow across existing and newly created green space. Channel protection volume is not required because the one-year post development peak discharge is less than or equal to 2.0 cubic feet per second.

The following items will need to be addressed during the detailed sediment control/stormwater management plan stage:

1. Prior to permanent vegetative stabilization, all disturbed areas must be topsoiled per the latest Montgomery County Standards and Specifications for Topsoiling.
2. A detailed review of the stormwater management computations will occur at the time of detailed plan review.
3. An engineered sediment control plan must be submitted for this development.

### **Landscaping and Lighting**

The existing landscaping on the site consists of mature white pines on either side of the access driveway, flowering dogwoods in front of the station, a 38-inch white oak and 23-inch hickory in the southwest quadrant of the site, and a mature screen of Leyland Cypress on the north property line. The applicant has proposed supplementing the vegetation with Norway spruce on the south property line, sweetbay magnolias and doublefile viburnum to frame the entrance, and cherry laurel and pfitzer junipers as foundation planting. No additional site lighting is proposed.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff recommends APPROVAL with conditions for this mandatory referral.

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### **Attachments:**

- Attachment 1: Vicinity Map for Station 30
- Attachment 2: Aerial photograph of Station 30
- Attachment 3: Site Plan
- Attachment 4: Landscape and Tree Protection Plan
- Attachment 5: Sketch of Proposed Modification
- Attachment 6: Notification Letter
- Attachment 7: Site Photographs