

**Township of Woolwich  
Committee of Adjustment Minutes**

**October 7, 2024**

The Committee of Adjustment held a virtual zoom meeting on the above date commencing at 4:30 p.m. Present: Tim Cronin, Linda Dickson, Kris Fletcher, Stephen Hartman and Jeremy Karn. Stephen Hartman chaired the meeting. Present from Township staff: Sherwin Meloney, Planner, Nancy Thompson, Secretary-Treasurer, and Erin Wetzel, Alternate Secretary-Treasurer

Stephen Hartman read a Land Acknowledgment.

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest - None

**MINOR VARIANCE APPLICATION A 13/2024 – Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southwest Ontario**

PROPERTY: 1248 Kramp Road, GCT Part Lot 85

ZONE / USE: Agricultural (A) / church and cemetery

PROPOSAL: The applicant is requesting permission to expand a legal non-conforming institutional use (existing place of worship) for the property to permit two detached buildings, as accessory uses, for a total building footprint of approximately 130 square metres consisting of the following:

- a proposed 112 square metre one storey with basement, multi-purpose building to be used for gatherings intended for children, food bank storage and an administrative office; and
- an existing 18 square metre accessory building of which 9 square metres is proposed to be used as a baptistery.

In support: Aidar Akbar, SAS Renovation, Berhanu Tesema and Tesfaye Bek representing the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

In opposition: Joanne Brohman and Judy Hoffman

Mr. Akbar discussed the application with the Committee, providing insight to the Church's functions and what they offer their congregation. An overview of all existing structures and the intent for the new proposed accessory building was given. The Church intends to utilize the proposed accessory building as a children's gathering space, administrative office, and cemetery maintenance equipment storage. Mr. Akbar noted the proposal will result in minimal impact to adjacent properties.

The Committee requested clarification on what type of maintenance equipment will be stored in the proposed basement and inquired if the items currently being stored outside will now be placed indoors. Mr. Akbar and Mr. Tesema indicated the maintenance equipment details are being discussed; however no heavy equipment will be stored in the basement. The proposal looks to install an access ramp on the south side of the proposed building. The overall square footage of the building will not change. Mr. Tesema confirmed they intend to use the space for items that are currently kept outside.

Ms. Brohman inquired on the size and setback of the proposed building to the rear cemetery fence. Staff advised the drawings provided do not confirm the setback dimension. Mr. Akbar noted the proposed building will be setback approximately 59 feet from the cemetery's rear fence line and the building itself is 30 feet wide by 40 feet long.

Ms. Brohman requested details on the proposed building's construction. Mr. Akbar advised the construction will be a typical concrete foundation with wood frame structure; exterior cladding is yet to be determined but will likely be siding. Ms. Brohman inquired if any landscaping will be completed between the cemetery and the proposed building. Mr. Tesema stated the church is open to suggestions regarding landscaping and the community may contact him via the church administration to discuss. Staff confirmed landscaping requirements will not be incorporated into the variance

decision unless the Committee notes otherwise. As noted in the recommendation, a site plan agreement will be required, and planning staff may require landscaping features through the site plan control process.

Ms. Hoffman noted her concerns regarding upkeep of the existing property and how this leads to further concerns of future buildings not being maintained. Ms. Hoffman commented on how the proposed building's presence may affect cemetery visitors, and reiterated Ms. Brohman's suggestion of landscaping between the cemetery and proposed building. Mr. Tesema reiterated the church's intent is to work with the community and encouraged community members to contact the church directly to setup a meeting.

The Committee asked Staff for clarification surrounding the engineering comments about the future upgrade of Kramp Road and relocation of the church parking areas. It was noted that during a site visit, the church was holding a function and vehicles were parked on Kramp Road. The Committee voiced concerns of how the future road upgrades may impede the current parking accommodations. Staff noted that parking is currently occurring within the road allowance and the site plan control process would determine if relocating the parking lot onto the property would be feasible. In the interim, an encroachment agreement would be entered into for the existing parking area.

Staff noted the applicant has been requested to speak with Metrolinks regarding the 300-metre-wide zone of the influence located at the rear of the property, which will determine where the parking lot may be relocated. Additionally, Staff indicated that when Kramp Road is upgraded, municipal servicing would be introduced; the property's existing septic system may be removed, and parking could be relocated to the current septic system location.

The Committee noted concerns of future usage on the property and if parking considerations will accommodate an increase of visitors. Staff noted the proposed building is not intended to increase parking requirements or capacity to the property. If the intended use is for anything other than noted in the proposal, further discussion will be needed.

The Committee asked for clarification on the term "environmental easement." Staff noted that according to Metrolinks, the environmental easement is in place to capture the impact of any emissions that come from the locomotives using the active train lines. Metrolinks has guidelines for properties adjacent to active rail lines and they typically request an easement. Staff advised Metrolinks would need to comment further on their specific requirements for the subject property.

The Committee inquired with the applicants if the cemetery ownership and perpetual care funds were transferred with the church ownership and Mr. Tesema confirmed they were. The Committee commented that the perpetual care funds require the property owner to maintain the cemetery and staff reiterated there is an ability to include landscaping standards in the Site Plan Agreement.

The Committee asked staff if the church property is subject to the Township's property standards by-law. Staff confirmed the by-law could apply to the church property, but cemeteries may also be regulated through the Bereavement Board of Ontario. Staff noted this application came about first as a property standards concern where the Township, as well as the Bereavement Authority, pursued the issues. Staff inquired of the applicant if an investigation is ongoing, and Mr. Tesema confirmed they have resolved the outstanding issues.

The Committee discussed and agreed that the proposal's intent is to rectify ongoing issues at the property, however the concerns regarding future development on the property still stand unresolved. These issues, such as parking, servicing, and the Metrolinks requirements, must be considered in regard to overall design and flow of the property, location of proposed buildings, and the future

development plans. The Committee noted a future site plan agreement should consider landscaping around the cemetery area, and driveway and building locations.

Moved by – Tim Cronin

Seconded by – Kris Fletcher

Discussion on the motion – The Committee noted they could provide support for the proposed minor variance subject to a friendly amendment to the decision to include a requirement for landscaping in and around the existing cemetery, particularly on the south and east sides. Mrs. Thompson commented this additional wording could be added to clause a) of the decision.

THAT Minor Variance Application A13/2024 (Debre-Sina Ethiopian Orthodox Church) concerning the subject property described as GCT Part Lot 85 and municipally addressed as 1248 Kramp Road, requesting:

1. Permission to expand an existing legal non-conforming institutional use, being a place of worship, in the Agricultural zone to permit the construction of an accessory use with a building footprint of 130 square metres and consisting of a one storey multipurpose building with basement for church uses, and to convert an existing shed to a Baptistery.

**be approved subject to:**

- a. Site plan agreement which will include the required warning clause required by Metrolinx and to address other matters such as the construction of the multipurpose building, the proposed driveway and future relocation of the parking area and landscaping in and around the existing cemetery (south and east sides).
- b. That the expansion is consistent with the drawings submitted on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, prepared by SAS Construction & Engineering.
- c. That an encroachment agreement is entered into with the Township at the owner's expense within a year of this application being approved to the Satisfaction of the Director of Infrastructure Services.
- d. To enter into an Infill Adjacent Development Agreement with, and to convey an Environmental Easement to, Metrolinx and that a clearance letter is provided by Metrolinx indicating that their conditions have been adequately addressed.

CARRIED

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Moved by – Tim Cronin

Seconded by – Jeremy Karn

THAT the minutes of the Committee of Adjustment meeting held September 9, 2024 be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

Meeting adjourned.

Erin Wetzel

Assistant Secretary-Treasurer