



CITY OF FORT PIERCE

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

REBECCA GROHALL, AICP, PLANNING MANAGER
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING ♦ DEVELOPMENT REVIEW
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ♦ URBAN DESIGN ♦ URBAN FORESTRY ♦ ZONING

TO: Nicholas Mimms, Interim City Manager
THROUGH: Rebecca Grohall, AICP, Planning Manager
FROM: Vennis Gilmore, Planning Analyst
SUBJECT: St. James Christian Academy Expansion
Conditional Use
4300 Okeechobee Road
DATE: November 25, 2015

STAFF REPORT

Owner: Orange Blossom Investment, LLC
4146 Okeechobee Road, Fort Pierce, FL 34947-5412

Applicant: St. James Christian Academy
4300 Okeechobee Road, Fort Pierce, FL 34947-5412

Representative: Don Bergman, Architect
P.O. Box 13537, Fort Pierce, FL 34979

Requested Action: Approval of a conditional use to expand the operation of an existing private school, located within the C-3 Zoning District

Location: 4300 Okeechobee Road

Parcel ID: 2418-431-0001-000-0

Zoning: C-3, General Commercial Zone

Future Land Use: GC, General Commercial

Surrounding Zoning:

North	East	South	West
R-4	C-3	C-3	C-3

Parcel Size: 8.36 acres

Staff Analysis:

The applicant, St. James Christian Academy is proposing to expand its current private school facility by 22,932 square feet; for a total of 65,188 square feet. The location is made up of one parcel, zoned C-3, General Commercial with a GC, General Commercial future land use.

The City Commission, in 2008, initially approved a Conditional Use request by Toussaint L'Ouverture International School, Inc. to establish a charter school within a portion of the east anchor unit of the Orange Blossom Business Center in 2008. Toussaint L'Ouverture International School, Inc. later vacated the facility, therefore St. James Christian Academy utilized the opportunity to relocate and occupy the facility; operating their private school within the approved area during the 2012/2013 St. Lucie County School year. In 2013, St. James Christian Academy was approved for Conditional Use of an expansion by the City of Fort Pierce.

The current school facility is approximately 42,256 square-feet, consisting of 16 classrooms, offices, and a cafeteria / auditorium without a commercial kitchen or food preparation area. Meals for the students and employees are catered. Coupled with the classroom expansion approved in 2013, St. James Christian Academy extended their outside playground, and integrated security access gates at both sides of the crosswalk which connects the student playground, student entrance, and pick-up/drop-off location.

The proposed plan includes the addition of 22 classrooms, offices, a multi-purpose room, a ballet studio, restrooms, and a breakroom. There is currently a total of 65 teachers and faculty members; with no recent plans of adding staff. The school has a total of 530 students from grades preschool through 12th grade. The recent expansion will only include grades K-4th. St. James Christian Academy also has compliant separation of age groups and activities per Department of Children & Families standards. The school will maintain a separate entrance/exit dedicated only for the school students, employees, and visitors as well as one emergency access from the school into the interior of the shared anchor building for an additional emergency escape route. The present expansion of St. James Christian Academy encompasses an investment surpassing \$1 million dollars.

The proposed expansion plan provides adequate parking and short-term bicycle parking for students and faculty. The facility will maintain access from the development entrances located on Okeechobee Road and Hartman Road, and adhere to the established traffic patterns for bus service and parent pick-up.

All affected Departments have reviewed the proposed Conditional Use and have approved it based on it meeting the requirements of the City Code.

Technical Review Committee:

The conditional use proposal was transmitted to TRC members and no comments were returned.

Property Owner Response Summary:

A total of 21 notifications of the proposed Conditional Use were mailed to the owners of property located within 500 feet of the subject property. As of November 25, 2015, 1 response has been received in support of the request. An update will be provided to the City Commission at the public hearing.

Planning Board Recommendation:

The Planning Board, at their November 10th, 2015, meeting, voted unanimously to recommend approval of the request with the recommended conditions presented by Staff.

Staff Recommendation:

The requested Conditional Use is consistent with City Code, the Comprehensive Plan, and does not adversely affect the public health, safety, convenience and general welfare; Staff recommends that the City Commission **approve** the requested conditional use with the following conditions:

- 1) The applicant adheres to the proposed plans for increased vegetative hedge along Hartman Road. City Code Section 22-194 d (4) requires installation within 60 days of conditional use approval.
- 2) The applicant provides an updated traffic report displaying any traffic impacts of school expansion.