

Special Permit Narrative – Medway Village Food Pantry

The Medway Village Food Pantry is a 100% choice pantry where clients may choose from a wide variety of items each week including shelf-stable foods, frozen meats, fresh produce, eggs, cheese, breads, paper goods, toiletries, cleaners & detergents, diapers & wipes, and menstrual care products. In many ways, we offer a shopping experience very similar to a grocery store, with one important exception: after someone shops for everything they need at the pantry, they take their groceries home free of charge.

While the median income of Medway is \$17,500, 1 in 10 households in Medway currently receives SNAP benefits, and over 1,000 residents of Medway rely on the two food pantries in Medway every week for assistance.

There are **many challenges in the current location** for the Medway Village Food Pantry, which operates in the basement of the Medway Village Church. Some of these include:

- **Limited hours:** Because we share our location with both a nursery school and a church, we can only access the space for a single 24-hour period each week, from Friday at 12:30 pm until Saturday at 12:30 pm.
- **Long lines:** Since we are only open for two hours each week, from 8-10AM Saturday mornings, clients must line up and wait their turn to come inside and shop. On average, we serve between 90-110 shoppers every Saturday morning – and more on the holidays. This can mean long wait times for people to access the pantry, and while we manage the traffic as best we can with dedicated outdoor volunteers, our current model often means dozens of cars lining up along the street in front of the church and in the parking lot on Peach Street.
- **Difficult to access:** At present, unless someone lives within a reasonable walking distance of the pantry, transportation is required in order to access the pantry services. Our current location is not conducive to residents who lack transportation because we cannot schedule or accept a van or bus load of clients.
- **Lack of efficiency:** Every week, it takes 30-40 volunteer hours to set up the food pantry on Friday afternoons, 60-70 volunteer hours to operate the pantry Saturday mornings to serve clients, and another 20-25 hours to restock and break down the pantry so the church and the nursery school can use the space for the majority of the week.

Benefits of location at 74 Main Street:

- A dedicated space will facilitate the unification of the two food pantries in Medway into a single location from which to serve the greater Medway community
- Accessible, including ability to walk to the pantry using sidewalks and crosswalks
- Set up as a grocery store for clients to shop based on their needs and preferences
- Able to be open multiple days during the week, more hours per day

- Appointment-based similar to a medical office – clients will have dedicated, scheduled appointments to minimize wait times and optimize traffic flow
- Use of shopping carts with volunteers to assist shoppers
- Plan to serve clients during hours that will not impact busy times for other service businesses and restaurants in the plaza

Summary of work to be completed:

- Build out interior space to create 833 square feet of shopping space, 686 square feet of storage space, 490 square feet of office space, 2 50-square foot ADA-compliant bathrooms, and 430 square feet for a client check-in and waiting area
- Replace an existing single-width door at the rear of the unit (part of the storage area) with a double-door egress that will allow for receiving pallets into the storage space.
- Install Polar King outdoor walk-in cooler/freezer behind pantry for additional cold storage, along with safety bollards, lighting, and any necessary adjustments to gutters/downspouts to maintain proper drainage

The proposed project meets the special permit criteria included in the Medway Zoning Bylaw, Section 3.4 Special Permit Criteria, as follows:

- **Page 79, TABLE 3. SCHEDULE OF OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS:**
 1. Medical office or clinic is 1 space per 300 sq. ft.
 2. Unit 3, currently under lease by the Medway Village Food Pantry, was previously occupied by the MetroWest Physician’s Group, a medical office.
 3. Service establishment is also 1 space per 300 sq. ft., so the parking requirements are comparable to the previous tenant.
- **Page 229, SECTION 10. CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**
 1. 10.1. PURPOSES
 - A. **To further the goals of the Medway Master Plan.** This is addressed in #8 below.
 - E. To improve walkability within the district and **provide better access between housing, shops, services, and employment.** A central location for the food pantry will provide walkable access to a critical service on which more than 1,000 Medway residents rely for their basic needs every week.

Page 25, SECTION 3.4, SPECIAL PERMITS:

- 1. The proposed site is an appropriate location for the proposed use.**
 - a. Central Business District is for commercial, retail entities. As described above, the food pantry will be set up like a grocery store, which is a commercial, retail operation, in alignment with the purpose of CB zoning.
- 2. Adequate and appropriate facilities will be provided for the operation of the proposed use.**
 - a. The food pantry will consist of 2,774 sq. ft., divided between shopping (833 sf), storage (686 sf), office (490 sf), bathrooms (100 sf), and client check-in and waiting areas (430 sf).
- 3. The proposed use as developed will not create a hazard to abutters, vehicles, pedestrians or the environment.**
 - a. Activity will occur inside the space as clients come in to shop or behind the unit for receiving deliveries
 - b. The food pantry in the proposed model is expected to generate similar foot traffic to a grocery store or medical office with appointments
 - c. The outdoor walk-in behind the pantry will fit within the same amount of space as the existing concrete pad currently behind the building – no impact to fire lane (see photos)
 - d. We will install safety bollards, lighting, and gutters/downspouts as needed to maintain proper drainage
- 4. The proposed use will not cause undue traffic congestion or conflicts in the immediate area.**
 - a. Appointment-based system will maintain a controlled, consistent flow of traffic, similar to a medical office, which occupied this same unit previously
 - b. We estimate scheduling approximately 10-15 appointments per hour
- 5. The proposed use will not be detrimental to the adjoining properties due to lighting, flooding, odors, dust, noise, vibration, refuse materials, or other undesirable visual, site or operational attributes of the proposed use.**
 - a. The food pantry operation will take place primarily inside the space and will not be detrimental to adjoining properties.
 - b. Lighting will be installed around the outdoor walk-in behind the building to improve safety and visibility
 - c. Per previously conducted sound testing, condensers on top of the outdoor walk-in only add 3 decibels at 6 feet away to the ambient noise when running – sound testing results included with application for review.
 - d. Another existing tenant already has a walk-in cooler/freezer behind its unit so our proposed walk-in is comparable to what already exists in the plaza.
- 6. The proposed use as developed will not adversely affect the surrounding neighborhood or significantly alter the character of the zoning district.**

- a. As noted above, a stated purpose of the Central Business District is to provide better access between housing, shops, services, and employment.
 - b. The food pantry, which will operate in a manner similar to a grocery store or other retail service provider, aligns with this purpose.
- 7. The proposed use is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of this Zoning Bylaw.**
- a. The food pantry will offer a consistent, accessible, sustainable option for children, adults, and seniors to shop for food and basic household goods on a weekly basis.
- 8. The proposed use is consistent with the goals of the Medway Master Plan.**
- a. Per the Medway Master Plan’s Vision Statement, “In 2032, Medway: Is a peaceful, friendly, inclusive community whose residents take care of each other and welcome and embrace new residents of all ages, identities, and backgrounds.” The purpose of the food pantry is to care for others and embrace residents of all ages, identities, and backgrounds.
 - b. The Master Plan further elaborates on this to state (**bold type added for emphasis**): “In 2032, Medway **fosters caring connections supported by accessible services**; academically thriving and inclusive schools; and arts, cultural, and recreation opportunities for all ages for a healthy, interconnected community. **Residents of Medway, of all income levels, ages, identities, abilities, ethnicities, and cultures support the community as volunteers**, actively participate in local decisions including at Town Meeting, and share in the various community events, festivals, and activities sponsored by the Town, schools, and local organizations. **Medway has** varied recreation, creative arts, and cultural options where teens and young adults engage with each other as well as **programming and services for older adults and intergenerational participants that fosters a socially connected community with strong support systems.**”
 - i. This location at 74 Main Street will both foster caring connections and offer accessible services.
 - ii. In 2024, the Medway Village Food Pantry had 415 volunteers, ranging in age from youth through senior citizens, dedicate over 9,000 hours of time in service to the community.
 - iii. A dedicated location for the food pantry will enable us to serve more older adults, many of whom are on fixed incomes, struggling to keep up with the rising costs of housing, food, utilities, and medical services, and who cannot access the pantry now due to limited hours, long lines, and lack of transportation.
- 9. The proposed use will not be detrimental to the public good.**
- a. Not only will the food pantry not be detrimental to the public good, it will provide a critical, sustainable resource to serve the greater Medway community, now and for years to come.