

October, 2025

Camas-Washougal Fire Department Station 41

528 NE 4th Avenue, Camas, WA

Type III Major Variance
City of Camas, WA

Applicant:

Aetta Architects
Attn: Terry Werdel
821 SE 14th Lp, Suite 109
Battle Ground, WA 98604
(360) 687-8379
terry@aetta.com

Contact:

MacKay Sposito, Inc.
Attn: Steven McAtee
18405 SE Mill Plain Blvd., Suite 100
Vancouver, WA 98683
smcatee@mackaysposito.com
(360) 603-5144



MSi Job #: 18237.01
Jurisdiction Case #: PA25-1062

Table of Contents

Introduction, Site Information, & Associated Applications.....	2
CMC 18.19 – Design Review / Downtown Design Manual.....	3
CMC 18.45 – Variances	3
18.45.010 Purpose.....	3
18.45.020 Major Variance; Decision Maker; Required Findings	4
18.45.030 Major Variance – Conditions for Granting-Extension.....	4
18.45.040 Major Variance – Approval Criteria	4
18.45.060 Prohibited Variance	5
CMC 18.11 – Parking.....	6
18.11.010 Applicability	6
18.11.060 Unspecified Use	6
18.11.130 Standards.....	6
18.11.070 Joint Use	7
CMC 18.55 – Procedures (Type III Review).....	7
Conclusion.....	8

Introduction, Site Information, & Associated Applications

The Camas-Washougal Fire Department is proposing the redevelopment of City-owned property at 528 NE 4th Avenue, Camas, Washington for the construction of a new municipal fire station and department headquarters (Fire Station 41). The project site encompasses approximately 37,026 square feet (0.85 acres) across two parcels (Tax Lots 78100000 and 78105000) and a portion of NE Everett Street, which is proposed for vacation and consolidation into the development site. The site is located within the Downtown Commercial (DC) zoning district and is currently occupied by a one-story commercial structure formerly operated as a Bank of America, now owned by the City.

The proposed facility is a two-story, 23,280-square-foot essential public facility designed to house apparatus bays, administrative offices, training rooms, sleeping quarters, and community-facing spaces. Site improvements include utility upgrades, stormwater management facilities, landscaping, and construction of a public plaza. The fire station will operate 24 hours per day with rotating staff shifts to provide uninterrupted emergency response services to Camas, Washougal, and the surrounding area.

Related applications submitted, submitted separately:

- Type II Site Plan Review
- Design Review (Major)
- Boundary Line Adjustment
- SEPA Checklist
- Street Vacation

Future permits associated with the project will include a demolition permit, building permit, engineering/civil permit, plumbing and mechanical permits, fire protection system permits, right-of-way permits, and erosion control permits.

This Major Variance request is narrowly focused on the off-street parking requirements of CMC 18.11. The Camas Municipal Code does not establish a minimum parking standard for fire stations. A comparable-use analysis demonstrates a theoretical requirement of 38 stalls. Providing this amount of on-site parking is not feasible due to the site's limited size, required apparatus circulation, and civic plaza improvements. The applicant therefore requests a Type III Variance to waive the requirement for on-site parking, with parking demand to be accommodated through on-street stalls and nearby municipal parking supply.

Essential Public Facility and Public Benefit Context

Fire Station 41 is classified as an essential public facility under Washington law. Its downtown location ensures rapid emergency response to Camas, Washougal, and surrounding neighborhoods, and aligns with the City's Comprehensive Plan policies for public safety and civic services. The requested parking variance allows the City to deliver this critical facility while maintaining downtown vitality, supporting multimodal access, and enhancing public amenities through streetscape improvements and a new public plaza.

CMC 18.19 – Design Review / Downtown Design Manual

18.19.010 – Purpose.

This chapter is intended to provide for orderly and quality development consistent with the design principles of the “Camas Design Review Manual: Gateways, Commercial, Mixed-Use and Multifamily Uses,” hereafter referred to as the Design Review Manual (DRM), the “Downtown Design Manual,” and the “North Shore Design Manual.” The design review process is intended to produce a meaningful integration of building, landscaping and natural environment.

18.19.025 – Scope of the Downtown Design Manual.

The provisions of this manual shall be applied to public and private parcels located within the downtown commercial zone. The standards within the DDM supersede the general requirements of the DRM for parcels located within the downtown commercial zone.

18.19.035 – Downtown Design Manual adopted.

The city’s design standards for the downtown commercial zone are contained in the Downtown Design Manual, which is adopted by the city.

Response: The Downtown Design Manual (DDM) supersedes general design review standards in the DC district. The Fire Station 41 project has been designed to comply with these standards, incorporating a civic plaza, pedestrian-oriented frontage, high-quality building materials, and landscaping consistent with downtown streetscape requirements. The requested variance supports the DDM’s intent by avoiding excess surface parking that would detract from walkability and public amenities.

CMC 18.45 – Variances

18.45.010 Purpose

A variance to any development standard contained in this title, other than density and lot area, may be granted when practical difficulties, unnecessary hardship, or results inconsistent with the general purposes of CMC Title 18, Zoning, would result from the literal enforcement of its requirements. The sole purpose of any variance shall be to prevent such difficulties, hardship, or results, and no variance shall be granted which would have the effect of granting a special privilege not shared by other property in the same vicinity and zone, except when necessary to avoid such difficulties, hardship, or results.

Response: Literal application of CMC 18.11 off-street parking standards creates a practical difficulty for Fire Station 41 and would limit the effective use of downtown Camas available space. The Camas code does not establish a minimum parking standard for fire stations, so the City directed the applicant to analyze “similar uses.” That analysis resulted in an estimated 38 stalls (see breakdown in Table 1). Providing 38 stalls on this small downtown parcel would consume the site, prevent safe fire department apparatus circulation, and eliminate public plaza improvements.

The requested variance avoids unnecessary hardship by allowing the station to operate by utilizing on-street and shared parking supply. This ensures the project functions while maintaining Title 18's purpose of safe, efficient, and compatible development. The variance is not a special privilege but is the minimum relief necessary for a public safety facility with unique operational needs.

18.45.020 Major Variance; Decision Maker; Required Findings

[...]

B. A major variance is one that results in the modification of a numerical development standard by more than ten percent. The board of adjustment is generally the decision maker regarding major variances. Where a variance is consolidated with an application for a Type III decision, the decision maker shall be the same as that for the Type III application. A major variance shall not be approved unless findings are made by the approval authority that all the approval criteria under CMC Section 18.45.030 are satisfied.

Response: This request modifies a numerical parking standard by more than 10 percent. The Hearings Examiner is the decision maker. Findings under CMC 18.45.040.B are provided below.

18.45.030 Major Variance – Conditions for Granting-Extension

In authorizing the variance, the approval authority may attach thereto such conditions that it deems to be necessary or desirable in order to carry out the intent and purpose of this chapter and the public interest. A variance so authorized shall become void after the expiration of one year, or a longer period as specified at the time of the approval authority action, if no building permit has been issued in accordance with the plans for which such variance was authorized, except that the approval authority may extend the period of variance authorization, without a public hearing, for a period not to exceed twelve months upon a finding that there has been no basic change in pertinent conditions surrounding the property since the time of the original approval.

Response: Acknowledged. The applicant will comply with any conditions deemed necessary.

18.45.040 Major Variance – Approval Criteria

[...]

B. Approval of a major variance must demonstrate with findings of compliance with all of the following criteria:

- 1. The variance shall not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitation upon uses of other properties in the vicinity and zone in which the subject property is located.*

Response: Other properties in the Downtown Commercial zone are typically served by shared public parking resources. The variance aligns Fire Station 41 with that same pattern, substituting nearby public for on-site stalls. Reconfiguration of parking spaces along downtown streets is proposed by City of Camas Public Works, resulting in an increase in the amount of available on-street parking. The resulting on-street supply (Dallas, Everett, Franklin) can accommodate the estimated demand of 38 spaces without detriment to surrounding uses who share existing parking spaces. See Exhibit 2 for the location of on-street parking spaces.

2. That such variance is necessary, because of special circumstances relating to the size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings of the subject property, to provide it with use, rights, and privileges permitted to other properties in the vicinity and in the zone in which the subject property is located;

Response: The site is uniquely constrained by its downtown location, the Everett Street vacation required for apparatus access and public plaza, and the operational needs of a fire station use that is staffed and available for service 24 hours per day. The proposed development will also serve as CWFD Headquarters, providing an important public service for the surrounding communities. These circumstances justify relief that allows the site to function while retaining use rights enjoyed by other downtown properties.

3. The granting of such variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the vicinity and in the zone in which the subject property is located.

Response: Granting the variance supports downtown vitality by avoiding excessive surface parking, which would conflict with pedestrian-oriented goals. Parking demand is offset by on-street supply documented and the City's commitment to coordinate parking during and after the Everett Street vacation. Together, these ensure no harm to public welfare or surrounding property. The project allows for the development of the proposed plaza which is a space available for anyone.

18.45.060 Prohibited Variance

Under no circumstances shall the approval authority grant a variance to permit a use not outright or conditionally permitted in the zone involved, or any use expressly or by implication prohibited by the terms of this title.

Response: The request does not involve a prohibited use; fire stations are allowed in the DC zone.

CMC 18.11 – Parking

18.11.010 Applicability

Response: All new development is required to provide the minimum number of off-street parking spaces as specified in CMC Table 18.11-1, unless modified by variance or other provisions of the code. Because fire stations are not listed in the table, the City directed the applicant to conduct a comparable-use analysis under CMC 18.11.060. This requirement establishes the basis for the present variance request.

[...]

18.11.060 Unspecified Use

In case of a use not specifically mentioned in Section 18.11.130 of this chapter, the requirements for off-street parking facilities shall be determined by the city in accordance with a conditional use permit. Such determination shall be based upon the requirements for the most comparable use listed.

Response: Fire stations are not listed in CMC 18.11.130. In consultation with City staff, the appropriate approach has been to conduct a comparable-use parking analysis to determine theoretical demand. This analysis demonstrates a calculated requirement of 38 stalls based on program spaces. While CMC 18.11.060 references use of a conditional use permit for unlisted uses, City staff have not directed that a separate conditional use permit is required for this project. Instead, the parking determination has been incorporated into this variance request and will be evaluated concurrently with the Site Plan Review and Design Review applications. This approach ensures the project record includes a clear parking analysis while maintaining consistency with the City's established permitting pathway.

[...]

18.11.130 Standards

The minimum number of off-street parking spaces for the listed uses shall be shown in Table 18.11-1, Off-Street Parking Standards. The city shall have the authority to request a parking study when deemed necessary.

Response: The applicant prepared a parking demand analysis by evaluating each use in aggregate. Table 1 below shows each anticipated use of the fire station and its associated parking requirement listed in this section. A total of 38 vehicle parking spaces is required.

Table 1. Estimated Parking Demand, CWFD Station 41

Use	Quantity	Comparable Standard	Estimated Stalls
Sleeping Rooms	11 each	1 per unit	11
Fitness Room	615 sq. ft.	1/260 sf + 1/employee	2
Offices/Meeting	4,033 sq. ft.	1/250 sf	16

Shop Space	166 sq. ft.	1/400 sf	0.5
Showcase/Decon	829 sq. ft.	1/900 sf	1
Storage	2,542 sq. ft.	1/1,000 sf	2.5
Apparatus Bays	5,270 sq. ft.	1/1,000 sf	5
Total	—	—	38

[...]

18.11.070 Joint Use

The city may authorize the joint use of parking facilities for the following uses: (1) daytime uses such as banks, offices, and retail stores; and (2) nighttime or Sunday uses such as theaters, assembly halls, and churches... Up to fifty percent of the parking facilities required for a church or theater may be supplied by the parking facilities required for a bank, office building, or retail store when such facilities are within three hundred feet of each other and the hours of operation do not normally overlap.

Response: The applicant does not propose on-site vehicle parking spaces. This variance request proposes the 38 parking spaces on adjacent streets. No joint use parking is proposed.

CMC 18.55 – Procedures (Type III Review)

Type II or Type III applications include all the materials listed in this subsection. The director may waive the submission of any of these materials if not deemed to be applicable to the specific review sought. Likewise, the director may require additional information beyond that listed in this subsection or elsewhere in the city code, such as a traffic study or other report prepared by an appropriate expert where needed to address relevant approval criteria. In any event, the applicant is responsible for the completeness and accuracy of the application and all of the supporting documentation. Unless specifically waived by the director, the following must be submitted at the time of application:

- A. A copy of a completed city application form(s) and required fee(s);*
- B. A complete list of the permit approvals sought by the applicant;*
- C. A current (within thirty days prior to application) mailing list and mailing labels of owners of real property within three hundred feet of the subject parcel, certified as based on the records of Clark County assessor;*
- D. A complete and detailed narrative description that describes the proposed development, existing site conditions, existing buildings, public facilities and services, and other natural features. The narrative shall also explain how the criteria are or can be met, and address any other information indicated by staff at the preapplication conference as being required;*
- E. Necessary drawings in the quantity specified by the director;*
- F. Copy of the preapplication meeting notes (Type II and Type III);*

G. SEPA checklist, if required;

H. Signage for Type III applications and short subdivisions: Prior to an application being deemed complete and Type III applications are scheduled for public bearing, the applicant shall post one four-foot by eight-foot sign per road frontage, unless a different size (not to be less than six square feet) is approved by the director. The sign shall be attached to the ground with a minimum of two four-inch by four-inch posts or better. The development sign shall remain posted and in reasonable condition until a final decision of the city is issued, and then shall be removed by the applicant within fourteen days of the notice of decision by the city. The sign shall be clearly visible from adjoining rights-of-way and generally include the following:

- 1. Description of proposal,*
- 2. Types of permit applications on file and being considered by the City of Camas,*
- 3. Site plan,*
- 4. Name and phone number of applicant, and City of Camas contact for additional information,*
- 5. If a Type III application, then a statement that a public hearing is required and scheduled. Adequate space shall be provided for the date and location of the hearing to be added upon scheduling by the city.*

I. A copy of a full title report.

Response: A Major Variance is subject to Type III review. The applicant acknowledges that this requires a public hearing before the Hearings Examiner. The variance application is being submitted concurrently with the Site Plan Review and Design Review materials, as directed at the pre-application meeting. Required application components are included: a complete application form, list of permit approvals sought, narrative addressing code compliance, site plan drawings, pre-application notes, SEPA checklist, title report, and a certified mailing list of property owners within 300 feet. This narrative document fulfills the narrative requirement of CMC 18.55.

Conclusion

The Fire Station 41 project requires relief from off-street parking standards due to the site's size, emergency circulation needs, and civic design features. The requested variance is the minimum necessary to allow essential fire operations while avoiding adverse impacts to downtown Camas. Parking demand will be met through nearby on-street and municipal supply, ensuring consistency with code intent. Approval will enable the City to provide a modern public safety facility that strengthens community services and downtown vitality.