



# STAFF REPORT

## CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

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**TO:** City Council **MEETING DATE:** September 3, 2024  
**FROM:** Michael Daniels, AICP, Development Services Director  
**SUBJECT:** Second and final Reading of Ordinance O-19-2024, requesting for closure of transportation connection between Grove Street and St Johns Avenue *Michael Daniels*

### PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

**APPLICANT:** James G Whitehouse, Esq.,  
St. Johns Law Group **OWNER:** Springs Chapel Corp.

**PROPERTY LOCATION:** Grove Street/St Johns Avenue Intersection

**FILE NUMBER:** PHR-24-001

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### SURROUNDING LAND USE

<b>EAST:</b>	<b>FLU:</b> Neighborhood <b>Z:</b> R-1 <b>Use:</b> Residential (Single Family)	<b>WEST:</b>	<b>FLU:</b> Mixed Use / Commercial <b>Z:</b> Gateway Corridor Commercial / Residential <b>Use:</b> Church / School/ Undeveloped Property
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### BACKGROUND

The property to the northwest of the intersection of St Johns Avenue and Grove Street is owned by Springs Chapel Corporation. The property is currently used as both a church and a school.

The property was approved for a Site Development Plan for the Orange Avenue Baptist Church by the City Council on May 7, 1997. After the approval of the site development plan, it was determined that due to traffic concerns along US 17 was required to secure a special exception to allow church uses within the R-1 Zoning District with rear access to St Johns Avenue. The Special Exception was approved on July 1, 1997, with the following conditions:

1. Orange Avenue Baptist Church shall bring all remaining properties into compliance with the current zoning requirements by acquiring a Special Exception and that the properties be made one single property through the filing of a Site Development Plan, that depicts the existing development, proposed development, landscaping, access, buffering and parking, and that this Site Development Plan be submitted and approved within 6 months of this meeting, and subject to the property being limited to one driveway, constructed to City standards, off St. Johns Avenue and depicted on the Site Development Plan.

In 2016, an amendment by Crossroads School was approved amending the original special exception to allow a school to be located at the site subject to the following conditions:

1. Ingress and egress for the school shall be limited to North Orange Avenue. No ingress and egress for the school shall be permitted off of St Johns Avenue.
2. The school shall comply with all comments from the City of Green Cove Springs Building Official and Clay County Fire Marshal.
3. An agent authorization for the Special Exception shall be executed by a director of the Springs Baptist Church Corporation, listed with the State of Florida.
4. Any parking created shall comply with the required landscaping requirements.
5. All signs on the property shall comply with Chapter 110 of the City Code.

In 2023, a code enforcement violation was issued to the property owner for failure to comply with the approved Special Exception approved in 2016, the violations included non-compliance with the following requirements:

1. Ingress and egress shall be limited to Orange Ave.
2. Lighting shall not encroach onto adjacent property.

The property owner has complied with the lighting issue by screening the lighting with a shield to limit the amount of encroachment onto adjacent property. To address the ingress and egress issue, the applicant requested a revision to their approved special exception for the school which was taken to the Planning and Zoning Commission on June 25, 2024. The request for a special exception revision was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission on a 3-2 vote subject to the conditions set forth in the attached Springs Academy special exception approval letter and staff report. One of the conditions of approval was the following was:

- *Block Grove Street at St Johns Avenue with a permanent barrier. Grove Street must be closed prior to the start of the school year, which is August 13, 2024, subject to City Council approval.*

Two other conditions of the Special Exception involve the timing of completion of the proposed special exception improvements:

- *Secure a Site Development Plan approval subject to the special exception requirements within 120 days;*  
*and*
- *Completion of construction of the improvements set forth in the approved Site Development Plan and conditions within the Special Exception within 6 months subsequent to Site Plan approval*

As a result, of these condition that were approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission, the applicant is requesting that the intersection of St Johns Avenue and Grove Street be closed to all vehicular traffic movements as a condition of their special exception.

Due to the timing of the improvements, it shall be necessary for the applicant to provide a temporary barrier and temporary drop-off / pickup stacking plan prior to the school year starting on August 12, 2024. As a result, of comments at the first public hearing, staff added the condition to add a 30 notice to surrounding property owners if the City Council would consider revisiting the access in the future. In addition, staff added the condition that the applicant/owner shall be required to pay the city a fee if the temporary barriers provided by the City are not replaced by the applicant if the closure is approved.

## **Comprehensive Plan Factual Support**

### **Objective 1.3. Character and Compatibility**

Future development and redevelopment projects shall protect the City's unique character, historic neighborhoods, and high quality of life.

**Policy 1.3.4.** The City shall require all new development and redevelopment projects to integrate harmoniously into established neighborhoods through the use of buffering, open space, landscaping, and other site design tools.

**Policy 1.3.5.** The City shall ensure that all existing, new, and expanded subdivisions are consistent with the sustainability, character, compatibility, resource preservation, and economic development efforts of the City.

**Policy 1.3.6.** The City shall prohibit future encroachment of nonresidential development into established neighborhoods which are incompatible with the character of the area.

Attachments Include:

- Ordinance O-19-2024
- Application
- Site Sketch by Applicant
- Property Owner Affidavit
- Staff Report for Special Exception Revision for the Springs Chapel Church and School, SE 24-002
- SE 24-002 Special Exception Approval Letter
- PZB Minutes from 6/25/24

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the closure of the St Johns Avenue/Grove Street intersection with the following conditions:

- Provide a temporary barrier prior to the start of the school year that restricts access to Grove Street from St Johns Avenue that complies with FDOT Standard Plans for Road Construction design criteria Index 102-100 and provide reflectors as approved by City staff. If barrier is not timely constructed pursuant to these requirements, the applicant shall be required to pay a barricade fee to the City as set forth in Section 62-59.
- As part of the construction of the Site Development Plan as required by the approved Special Exception (SE-24-002) for the Church/School located at 1106 N Orange Avenue, the applicant/developer shall be required to remove the asphalt and lime rock within the portion of closed right-of-way from St Johns Avenue for 10' from the Right of Way as shown on Exhibit "B", as well as sod, landscape and buffer the area meeting the following requirements:
  - Provide a 6' high brick, stone or concrete block wall as set forth in the buffering requirements in Sec. 113-243(f) of the City Land Development Code at 10' from the right of way line as shown on Exhibit "B".
  - Small trees as set forth in the landscape buffer specifications in Sec. 113-243(f)(8) providing an average of 1 tree per 25 lineal feet and irrigating through the establishment period of said landscaping.
  - Provide a continuous hedge row pursuant to the specifications set forth in Sec. 113-244(f)(8)(b.).
  - Maintenance Agreement pursuant to Sec. 101-331 of the City LDC shall be required as part of the Site Development Plan approval.
  - Provide a 30-day notice to property owners within 300' of the Grove Street/St Johns Avenue intersection, if City Council were to consider reopening access at this location.

**RECOMMENDED MOTIONS:**

Motion to recommend approval of the second and final reading of Ordinance O-19-2024 to close and discontinue access between Grove Street and St Johns Avenue subject to staff comments.