

**Tax Map/Block/Parcel  
No. 15-12-22,21,72,84 & 9**

**Case 5451**

**OFFICIAL DECISION  
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS  
CARROLL COUNTY, MARYLAND**

**APPLICANT:** Peter & John Radio Fellowship, Inc.  
c/o Jon Bisset, Director  
4443 Grave Run Road  
Manchester, Maryland 21102

**ATTORNEY:** Isaac Menasche

**REQUEST:** A certification and expansion of a non-conforming use, to wit: River Valley Ranch operating an Evangelical Christian Church on portions of the property zoned Conservation; to acknowledge the non-conforming status of existing structures; and to approve the Health Center and dormitory facilities.

**LOCATION:** The site is located at 4443 Grave Run Road, Manchester, MD 21102, on property zoned "A & C" Agricultural & Conservation District in Election District 6.

**BASIS:** Code of Public Local Laws and Ordinances, Section 223-9

**HEARING HELD:** December 3, 2008

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

On December 3, 2008, the Board of Zoning Appeals (the Board) convened to hear a request for a certification and expansion of a non-conforming use, to wit: River Valley Ranch operating an Evangelical Christian Church on portions of the property zoned Conservation; to acknowledge the non-conforming status of existing structures; and to approve the Health Center and dormitory facilities. Based on the testimony and evidence presented, the Board made the following findings and conclusion:

The subject property is a 439.9 acre piece of land with a split zoning designation of "A" Agricultural and "C" Conservation. Since 1952, the property has served as a non-denominational Christian camp sponsored by the Applicant. The mission of the camp has always been to evangelize young people. In addition to serving as a faith based summer camp, the property is used as a retreat center, outdoor education area for local schools, and to host

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seasonal events that are open to the public including rodeos and a corn maze. The property is also used to train candidates for youth ministry. The capacity of the camp is 300 youths per session.

The Board found River Valley Ranch to be an evangelical church, with a focus on nurturing the Christian faith in young people. Since the church pre-dates the County's adoption of zoning in 1964, the church is a non-conforming use in the Conservation zone. This conclusion is based on the testimony of leaders of the church, as well as camp brochures dating back to 1952. In addition, the Board acknowledged and ratified the existence of the bath house, teepee camping village, and pavilion which have been constructed as a part of the church on land within the "C" Conservation zone. The buildings and uses are an integral part of the ministry. Finally, the Board granted the expansion of the non-conforming use by approving the new health office with nurses' quarters which may also be used by student interns during the off season. There is no evidence that the prior and proposed expansion of this church has or will increase noise, dust, traffic, fumes or any other adverse effects on the neighborhood. In addition, the new nurse's station/health office will serve the health needs of the campers.

Accordingly, the Applicant's requests are granted in total.

Date

1/6/09

Jacob M. Yingling  
Jacob M. Yingling, Chairman