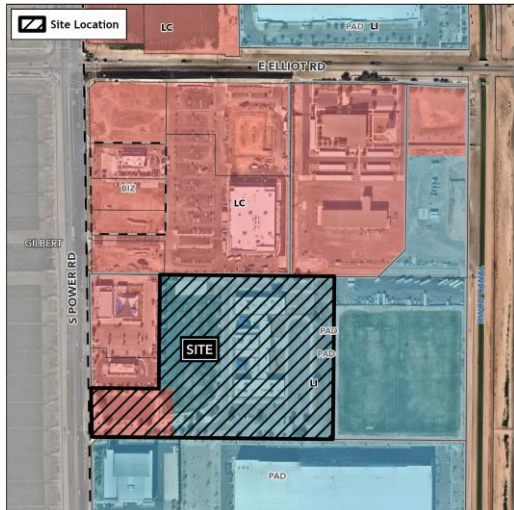


City Council Staff Report

Date	July 20, 2026	
Case No.	ZON26-00333	
Project Name	Faith Christian School	
Request	• Council Use Permit for a Private School • Modification of Conditions of Approval of Ordinance No. 4646 (Case No. Z06-088)	
Project Location	3761 South Power Road	
Parcel No(s)	304-17-770	
Project Area	9.9± acres	
Council District	District 6	
Existing Zoning	Light Industrial with two Planned Area Development Overlays (LI-PAD-PAD), and Limited Commercial with two Planned Area Development Overlays (LC-PAD-PAD)	
General Plan Designation	Regional Employment Center	
Applicant	Ganeen Harstick, Faith Christian School	
Owner	Leman Academy of Excellence Inc.	
Staff Planner	Jennifer Merrill, Senior Planner	
Prop 207 Waiver Signed?	Yes	

Recommendation

Staff finds that the Proposed Project is consistent with the Mesa 2050 General Plan, and the criteria for a Council Use Permit as specified in Section 11-70-6 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO).

Staff recommends approval with conditions.

Planning & Zoning Board Recommendation:

On June 10, 2026, the Planning and Zoning Board **voted (7-0)** to recommend that City Council **approve** the Proposed Project with conditions.

Project Overview

Request:

The applicant is requesting approval for a Council Use Permit to convert an existing charter school to a private school on 9.9+ acres.

This request includes the removal of conditions 1 through 5, 8, 12, and 13 from Case No. Z06-088 (Ordinance No. 4646) for the 9.9± acre school property, because those conditions are not applicable to the school.

This request does not remove those conditions from the remaining acreage associated with Case No. Z06-088 (Ordinance No. 4646).

Site Context

General Plan:

- The Placetype for the project site is Regional Employment Center and the Growth Strategy is Evolve.
- Regional Employment Centers accommodate large employers such as hospitals and medical centers, airports, universities, corporate headquarters, high-tech companies, and research parks. They should provide sufficient amenities to support employees, and provide smooth transitions between land uses.
- A school is a public/semi-public land use, which is a Supporting Land Use in the Regional Employment Center Placetype.
- The Proposed Project is consistent with the Regional Employment Center Placetype and furthers the implementation of, and is not contrary to, the Vision, Guiding Principles, Strategies, and applicable elements of the Mesa 2050 General Plan.
- Supporting General Plan Strategies:
 - HS4. Support high-quality early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education systems in Mesa.

- LU1. Promote a balance of land uses to enhance the quality of life for current and future generations.

Sub-Area Plan:

- The project site is located within the Mesa Gateway Strategic Plan's Inner Loop District.
- The focus of this district is to provide a balance of jobs providing employment opportunities and services for those residing in the area.
- The Proposed Project is consistent with the intent of the Mesa Gateway Strategic Plan.

Zoning:

- The project site is zoned Light Industrial with two Planned Area Development Overlays (LI-PAD-PAD) and Limited Commercial with two Planned Area Development Overlays (LC-PAD-PAD).
- A private school is a permitted use within the LI and LC Districts with approval of a Council Use Permit.

Surrounding Zoning & Use Activity:

The proposed Private School is compatible with surrounding land uses, which include small scale commercial recreation, offices, restaurants with drive-thrus, mini-storage and agricultural uses.

Northwest LC Dutch Bros (in development)	North LC EOS Gym (in development)	Northeast LC RWCD Offices and Maintenance
West LC-PAD Swim School and Restaurant w/Drive-Thru then (Across S. Power Rd.) Town of Gilbert Agricultural	Project Site LI-PAD-PAD Existing Chater School	East LI-PAD-PAD Vacant
Southwest (Across S. Power Rd.) Town of Gilbert Agricultural	South LI-PAD Mini-Storage	Southeast LI-PAD Mini-Storage

Site History:

- September 22, 1998: City Council annexed 154.3± acres, including the project site, into the City of Mesa (Case No. A98-004; Ordinance No. 3535).
- December 21, 1998: City Council approved a rezoning for 141.7± acres, including the project site, from Maricopa County Rural-43 to City of Mesa Single Residence-43 (R1-43 [equivalent to RS-43]) (Case No. Z98-103; Ordinance No. 3577).
- April 5, 1999: City Council approved a rezoning for 82± acres, including the project site, from R1-43 to Limited Multiple Residence (R-3 [equivalent to RM-3]), Limited Commercial (C-2 [equivalent to LC]), Limited Industrial (M-1 [equivalent to LI]) and General Industrial (M-2 [equivalent to GI]) with a Development Master Plan (DMP) overlay for the development of a mixed-use development (Case No. Z99-016; Ordinance No. 3610).
- April 5, 2004: City Council approved a rezoning for 20.5± acres, including the project site, from Limited Multiple Residence (R-3 [equivalent to RM-3]) to General Commercial (C-3 [equivalent to GC]) within an approved Development Master Plan (DMP), to bring zoning into conformance with the Mesa 2025 General Plan per City Council direction (Case No. Z04-003; Ordinance No. 4183).
- December 4, 2006: City Council approved a rezoning for 20.5± acres, including the project site, from C-3-DMP to C-2-PAD-DMP and M1-PAD-DMP, Site Plan Review, to allow an office/warehouse development with commercial/retail lots fronting the arterial streets (Case No. Z06-088; Ordinance No. 4646). Conditions of approval include:
 - (#1) Compliance with the basic development as described in the project narrative, design guidelines, and as shown on the site plan, and preliminary plat submitted, (without guarantee of lot yield, building count, or lot coverage).
 - (#2) Along the northern tier of industrial lots (lots 18-23), provide an eight (8') foot high screen wall and one tree every fifty linear feet in an 8' by 8' landscape planter.
 - (#3) Review of all development by the Design Review Board for compliance with the Zoning Ordinance, with attention to compatibility of architectural styles and a landscape theme.
 - (#4) Provide Code required landscaping and foundation base.
 - (#5) Review and approval of a SUP for a comprehensive sign package through the Board of Adjustment.
 - (#8) Compliance with all requirements of the Subdivision Technical Review Committee.
 - (#12) Tiling of irrigation ditch at the north property line.
 - (#13) Eight-foot (8') fence along the east property line.
- June 10, 2014: Building permit issued for Hillcrest Academy Charter School (Permit No. BLD2014-01409).

- October 10, 2014: Land Split for Hillcrest Academy was recorded following approval by the City (Case No. LS14-006; Recording No. 2014-0671967). The property has operated as a charter school since 2014.

Project/Request Details

Site Plan:

- Existing School: No physical changes are proposed for the existing 49,036 square foot school building, and the facility is anticipated to serve a similar number of students.
- Access: The site is accessed via a driveway from Power Road. No changes are proposed.
- Parking: The property currently has 88 parking spaces. No changes are proposed for the parking areas.
- Landscaping: The existing landscaping is proposed to be maintained on the property.

Council Use Permit:

The Proposed Project includes a Council Use Permit to convert an existing charter school to a private school. A private school requires approval of a Council Use Permit, which is reviewed per Section 11-70-6 of the MZO.

Approval Criteria - Section 11-70-6(D):

1. **Approval of the proposed project will advance the goals and objectives of and is consistent with the policies of the General Plan and any other applicable City plan and/or policies:**

Per Chapter 2 of the Mesa 2050 General Plan, the City is dedicated to nurturing the intellect and potential of its residents as well as the cultivation of a skilled workforce pipeline. Strategy HS4 states "Support high-quality early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education systems in Mesa."

The Proposed Project supports the continued use of an established educational campus and preserves a community-serving school facility without requiring a change in zoning or land use

2. **The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed project are consistent with the purposes of the district where it is located and conform with the General Plan and with any other applicable City plan or policies;**

A public or charter school is a permitted use in the LI and LC zoning districts, and a private school is permitted with approval of a Council Use Permit. The Proposed Project will be used for high school and K-9 grade levels.

Per Section 11-31-24 of the MZO, schools shall comply with A) the building setback and building height requirements established by the Zoning District where the school is located; B) landscaping and screening requirements as specified for a LC development; and C) all parking requirements specified in Chapter 32.

- A. The existing 28-foot-tall school building complies with the maximum heights and minimum setbacks of the LI and LC Districts.
3. The landscape yard along the south side of the entrance drive is 9.5-feet wide and does not meet this criteria. Per Section 11-33-3(B)(2)(a)(ii) of the MZO, a 15-foot wide landscape yard is required along the interior property lines. Per Section 11-33-1(B)(2) of the MZO, additional landscaping is required for the Proposed Project.
 4. There are currently 88 parking spaces on the property. Based on parking ratios specified in Table 11-32-3.A of the MZO, 197 parking spaces would be required. The Proposed Project includes no physical changes to the site, and no change in use to the building or site. Per Section 11-32-1(B) of the MZO, because there is no physical change to the site nor change in use, no additional parking is required for the Proposed Project.
 5. **The proposed project will not be injurious or detrimental to the adjacent or surrounding properties in the area of the proposed project or improvements in the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the City; and**

The Proposed Project does not introduce a materially different land use, does not expand the building footprint, and does not propose external intensification of the site.

The continuation of school operations is compatible with the established character of the property as an educational campus.

6. **Adequate public services, public facilities and public infrastructure are available to serve the proposed project.**

The existing site is served by the public services, facilities, access, and infrastructure necessary for continued school use, subject to applicable City review and compliance requirements.

Citizen Participation

The applicant conducted a Citizen Participation process, notifying surrounding property owners within 1,000 feet, and HOAs and registered neighbors.

The applicant and the City staff did not receive any comments on the Proposed Project.

Required Notification:

- Property owners within 1,000 feet, HOAs within ½ mile, and registered neighborhoods within one mile of the project site were notified of the public hearing.
- The applicant and the City staff did not receive any comments on the Proposed Project.

Conditions of Approval

Staff recommends **approval** of the Council Use Permit and amendment to remove conditions of approval 1 through 5, 8, 12 & 13 from Case No. Z06-088 (Ordinance No. 4646) for the 9.9 acre project site, subject to the following conditions:

1. Compliance with Ordinance No. 4646, except for conditions of approval number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12, and 13.
2. Compliance with the Good Neighbor Policy submitted as part of the Proposed Project.
3. Compliance with all applicable City development codes and regulations.
4. Any future exterior improvements or site modifications will be reviewed in accordance with applicable City requirements.

Exhibits

Exhibit 1 - Presentation

Exhibit 2 - Ordinance

Exhibit 3 – Ordinance Map

Exhibit 4 - Vicinity Map

Exhibit 5 - Site Plan

Exhibit 6 - Minutes

Exhibit 7 - Submittal Documents