

Minutes

Walkersville Planning Commission Meeting

April 23, 2019

Commission Chairman Dick Brady called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. with members David Ennis, Mike Kuster, Tim Pollak, Ray Santullo, Russ Winch and John Zimmerman present. Also present were Town Commissioners Tom Gilbert, Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis, Michael Bailey, and Mike McNiesh, Frederick County Board of Education President Brad Young and members Karen Yoho and Joy Schaeffer, Town Engineer Shawn Burnett and Town Planner Susan Hauver.

1. Minutes

Member Kuster made a motion, seconded by Member Winch, to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2019 meeting. The motion passed on a vote of 6-0-1 (Brady).

Member Winch made a motion, seconded by Member Kuster, to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2019 workshop as corrected. The motion passed on a vote of 7-0.

2. Revised Site Plan: Rock Creek School

Planner Hauver reviewed the staff memo on the revisions made to the plan in response to staff and agency comments as well as public comments at the January meeting and April workshop.

The applicant, Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS), was represented by Mr. Bruce Dean of Linowes and Blocher, Mr. Paul Lebo, COO of Frederick County Public Schools, Mr. Jason Fritz of Adtek Engineers, Ms. Kori Purdum Matheis of Profitt and Associates, Mr. Mike Norton of Norton Land Design, Mr. Carl Wilson of the Traffic Group, and Brian Staiger of FCPS.

Mr. Dean and Ms. Purdum Matheis updated the Commission of the applicants' effort to address comments received from the Commission members and community members, and noted the following:

- **Traffic:** They have addressed the problem of queuing cars at drop-off and pick-up times by providing a driveway/loop for cars to stack on site instead of the street. They eliminated the third entrance they had proposed along Frederick Street and also are proposing to close the Maryland Avenue entrance. The driveways in and around the middle school have been reconfigured in accordance with changes to the entrances and exits.
- **Parking:** They created new parking areas on the middle school site to compensate for the spaces eliminated to accommodate the new school. There is a significant amount of parking adjacent to the Rock Creek School, which also makes up for the eliminated parking areas. He also noted that they would be willing to offer Rock Creek School as a polling place since there will be ample parking adjacent to the front entrance. He noted they are serving competing interests of providing ample parking and of limiting impervious surfaces.
- **Buffering:** They created elevations to see how the school would look from the perspective of the homes in Mill Run and pulled the grading in 25 feet from the property line to provide for more landscaping along the property line. They completely removed the proposed retaining wall except for a small section near the northwest corner of the property that is 6'4" tall. They also removed the drive aisle and parking on the Mill Run side of the building. They added a significant amount of landscaping along the property line shared with Glade Village residents. They are willing to put in a fence along the Glade Village side of the property, although they are not convinced it is necessary.

- School bus parking: They noted that FCPS has had buses parking overnight on site for decades without complaints. The proposed bus parking is 200'-300' further away from houses. Member Winch asked why the buses can't be parked across the street at the "B" Building. Mr. Lebo said that they need the parking there for evening programs and teacher workdays. There is no room in that lot when the facility is at capacity.

Member Ennis said that the proposed bus parking constitutes a bus depot. The buses warming up at 5 or 6 AM could negatively affect the neighbors. Member Kuster also expressed his opposition to the bus parking.

Member Santullo suggested there be no additional bus parking permitted. Member Zimmerman noted that the drivers of those buses live in the Walkersville area and it was noted by the applicants that the buses serve the Walkersville feeder pattern. Mr. Dean said they are also willing to place a cap on the number of buses.

Chairman Brady noted that the headlights of the buses leaving the site might shine in the windows of the nearest homes. He suggested taller landscaping to mitigate that.

- Lighting: The applicants noted that they significantly reduced the lighting near the Mill Run and Glade Village neighbors. The lights will only face the parking areas and school. The intensity of the lights is reduced at 8 or 9 PM each evening. They will put more lighting near the crosswalk on Frederick Street as requested by the Commission.
- Pedestrian Access: The path from Mill Run will cross the stormwater swale and will be ADA compliant. They will add a note to that effect on the plans.
- Stormwater Management: Mr. Dean noted that that the middle school serves as an uncontrolled, un-designed, stormwater management facility. An additional 60 acres affects this site. He noted that their proposed concrete swale was favored by the County SWM engineer, but that they are proposing a combination of grass swale and underground pipe in response to concerns expressed by the Town. The revised plan will be reviewed by DUSWM (due to the need to relocate sewer line crossing the property), Frederick County development review and the Town engineer. The review process will be as rigorous as for any other project in the County.

Member Ennis asked about the catchment area, and the Mr. Fritz noted that they are recreating the existing ponding volume on site. The underground culverts are designed to accommodate the typical 1 to 2 year storm and the swale will be needed for less frequent large storm events.

- Emergency Generator: The emergency generator will provide emergency power, but not 100% back-up power. Commission members requested that the sound of the weekly testing be mitigated so it is not heard by the residents of Mill Run.

Mr. Dean concluded the applicants' presentation by requesting approval of the site plan, approval to locate two principal buildings on one lot, and approval to remove one specimen tree on the property.

Mr. Ennis commented on the water lines to be located on the property. He would like to see fire hydrants to be oriented as T's in the lines not with bends. Mr. Fritz noted the challenge of keeping the water and sewer easements on the property separated.

Mr. Ennis asked why the retaining wall on the northeast side of the property was shown without a fence. The applicants noted that they will need to construct according to building codes.

Mr. Kuster asked how emergency vehicles could turn around on Maryland Avenue as well as on site. The applicants said they could place a Knox Box on the pole gate at the end of Maryland Avenue. The T-turnaround in the loading area behind the new school could be used by emergency vehicles.

Mr. Winch asked about blasting on site and the applicants noted that their geotechnical studies indicated no need to blast on site. It was already added to the notes on the plans.

Mr. Brady noted that there is a black cherry tree on site that appears to be in poor condition. He suggested that be noted on the plans in case the tree dies after the development of the site.

Mr. Brady asked about the material of the retaining walls. They will be concrete forms and the Planning Commission can pick the design. The walls can have a blank top or a decorative cap.

Mr. Brady asked about the access, egress easement across the former library property owned by Frederick County. Mr. Dean said it was completed and just needs to be recorded. He will forward a copy to the Town after it is recorded.

Mr. Brady noted a typographical error in Note 24.

In response to Mr. Brady's question, the applicants said they plan to replace the Walkersville Middle School sign and add a new sign for the Rock Creek School.

Mr. Brady asked about access to the 4 basketball courts through the fences and suggested another gate be added in the interior. He asked about the height of the fences, which related to the height of the basketball hoop.

Mr. Brad Young, President of the Frederick County Board of Education, noted that Board Vice President Joy Schaeffer and Board Members Karen Yoho were also in attendance and requested that the plans be approved. The law requires that the school be co-located with another school. He reviewed why the site was selected for the school and also reviewed improvements planned or underway for repaving the high school parking lots and adding field space (for use by the high school teams) behind the elementary school. The school will be phenomenal for the Town and he asked for approval.

Ms. Mary Malone, Rock Creek School Principal, along with the school Vice Principal, spoke on behalf of the school, noting the dedicated staff and parent community. It is a truly supportive educational environment. They are excited about joining the Walkersville community. High school students interested in nursing or special education could be placed in internships in the school.

Ms. Rachel Ablondi(?), parent of a student at Rock Creek School, also spoke in favor of the school.

Mr. Robert Peters, Walkersville resident for 43 years, noted that his wife worked at the school for 22 years. He noted that the school would be a value added for the community.

Town Commissioner Mike McNiesh noted that no one is opposed to the students attending the school. He hopes that the impact on the community will be minimized. He asked what the safety plan would be for construction during the school year.

Mr. Matt Lubold, resident of Mill Run, noted that the questions about the school were limited to infrastructure, and were not about the population being served by the school. He noted stormwater management concerns, noting standing water at Lonza. The Town needs to look at the municipal storm system as a whole. He asked that the Commission take the time to consider all the impacts when reviewing the plans.

Town Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis noted that citizen input has made a difference in the plans. The applicants listened. She noted improvements to the loss of specimen trees, buffering, pedestrian access, stormwater management and reduced impervious surfaces. She appreciates changes made to the plans. She still has concerns about the impact of the facility to neighbors in Glade Village and Mill Run, lighting, and the safety of middle school students and staff during construction. She noted her support of co-locating a parks and recreation facility for the special needs population within the school facility.

Mr. Bruce Dean asked Mr. Brian Staiger, FCPS project manager to review the construction schedule and precautions taken to protect the middle school students and staff during construction. The construction area perimeter will be fenced. They will do their best to minimize noise. They will take testing days off from construction. The construction will take 18-20 months.

Mr. Dean said they would hope to leave the meeting with conditional approval or knowing what issues to address.

Member Winch made a motion, seconded by Member Santullo, to grant conditional approval subject to staff and agency approval of the stormwater management plans.

Commission members discussed the motion, noting that the details of the SWM need to be worked out. The parking of buses on site was also noted as a concern. Several members noted that the applicants have come a long way to address the Commission's and citizen's concerns.

Chairman Brady felt that it was premature to conditionally approve the plans. The access agreement needs to be in place and the technical aspects of the plans need to be reviewed.

Member Winch amended his motion to approve the plans in concept pending submission of the stormwater management plans and computations and staff and agency reviews of them. Member Santullo seconded the motion.

During discussion of the main motion, Member Ennis made a sub-motion, seconded by Member Kuster, to amend the motion to prohibit overnight parking of buses on the site because it would be detrimental to the neighbors and because bus parking is not a function of the school. The sub-motion failed on a vote of 2-5 (Winch, Brady, Pollak, Santullo and Zimmerman opposed).

The main motion, granting conditional approval of the concept, was approved on a vote of 6-1 (Kuster opposed).

By common consent, Commission members agreed to hold off on the vote regarding the one specimen tree.

Member Pollak made a motion, seconded by Member Winch to approve the addition of a second principal building on the one lot, as permitted in Section 88-5.1 of the Zoning Ordinance. The motion passed on a vote of 5-1-1 (Kuster opposed, Ennis abstained).

Chairman Brady thanked those in attendance for coming and reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Hauver