

**Albemarle County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
FINAL Minutes October 25, 2022**

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending were: Karen Firehock, Chair; Julian Bivins; Fred Missel; Luis Carrazana; and Lonnie Murray

Members absent: Corey Clayborne

Other officials present were: Charles Rapp, Director of Planning; Andy Herrick, County Attorney's Office; Scott Clark; Kevin McCullum; Rebecca Ragsdale; Alberic Karina-Plun and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commission.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Ms. Firehock said opportunities for the public to access and participate in the hybrid meeting were posted on the County's website, on Planning Commission's homepage, and on the County Calendar when available. She said participation would include the opportunity to comment on those matters from which comments from the public would be received.

Ms. Shaffer called the roll.

Ms. Firehock established a quorum.

Other Matters Not Listed on the Agenda from the Public

There were none.

Consent Agenda

No items from the Consent Agenda were commented on nor pulled.

Mr. Bivins moved to adopt the Consent Agenda. Mr. Missel seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Public Hearings

SP202200018 St. Paul's Ivy Preschool

Ms. Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager, said the application was a special use permit request for St. Paul's Ivy Preschool which was to be located within an existing church building. She said the site was located at 851 Owensville Road, and the property was accessed from Neves Lane. She said the site was about 15 acres and was designated as rural area (RA) in the Comprehensive Plan but was zoned residential. She noted that there were nearby commercial uses along Route 250.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the existing church building would be used for the preschool. She noted that the entrance for student drop-off would be at the back of the building. She said there was an existing entrance on Owensville Road and an exit on Neves Lane. She explained that the lower level of the building would be used for the school and that there were existing classrooms that would be utilized. She noted that there was a playground.

Ms. Ragsdale said that there was a cemetery, that the edges were primarily buffered with trees, and that beyond the trees to the north was lower-density residential zoning. She said that the school only proposed an enrollment of 24 students. She said the concept plan was provided, and it labeled the locations of play areas and parking areas. She said that there would be plenty of parking available to staff.

Ms. Ragsdale explained that the hours of operation would be from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., Monday through Friday, with an extended day option to 2 p.m. She said that the application had been reviewed by staff to consider the pick-up and drop-off and that VDOT had reviewed the application with no objections to the request.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the application had been analyzed against the criteria in the ordinance for special use permits, and staff believed that there would be no detriment to abutting properties. She continued that staff believed there would be no transportation safety concerns and that the proposal was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan given the size and scale of the use.

Ms. Ragsdale noted that the Comprehensive Plan mentioned that there was a need for those types of services in the rural area, so staff believed that the proposed site would be a good location for the use. She noted that the proposal only used existing facilities and was limited in size.

Ms. Ragsdale noted that a community meeting was held, and a few individuals attended. She said that many had questions about the school program, and some brought up traffic concerns. She said that an email was received from one of the neighbors that expressed concerns regarding Neves Lane primarily related to maintenance. She continued that staff would follow up with VDOT on the maintenance.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the staff recommendation was for approval. She noted they had covered the conclusions as to the reasons why and that they did not have any concerns about the proposal. She said that there were conditions included with approval and that those conditions addressed the hours of operation, pick-up, and drop-off, and fencing requirements for safety.

Ms. Firehock noted there were no questions from the Commission. She invited the applicant to present.

Ms. Firehock explained the rules for the applicant's presentation during the public hearing.

Ms. Allison Kretlow said she was one of two directors for the proposed preschool. She introduced Ms. Audie Barlow, Director of Children and Youth Ministries at St. Paul's. She said she would speak on behalf of the preschool and that Ms. Barlow would be able to answer questions related to the church.

Ms. Kretlow said Ms. Melissa Kelly was the other co-director of the proposed preschool, but she was not present. She introduced the church Rector, Father Justin McIntosh, and noted that he was present in the audience.

Ms. Kretlow said that her entire 19-year-long career had been focused on early-childhood learning. She said that her undergraduate degree, master's degree, and doctorate were all in early elementary and special education. She stated that she had taught preschool and elementary school, provided teacher development for local counties, and worked in early intervention.

Ms. Kretlow explained she stopped working full-time in the field after she became a mother. She continued that her break allowed her to see firsthand the needs of western Albemarle County families in terms of preschool-aged children. She said as the population in that part of the County had grown exponentially over the last 10 years, the preschool offerings had not been able to keep up with the increased demand.

Ms. Kretlow said that almost all of the Christian and secular preschools in the area had extensive waitlists and that families with children only a few months old were pressured to secure enrollment for children who were two years away from attending preschool.

Ms. Kretlow said that she never planned to open a preschool and noted that she and Ms. Kelley had recently reentered teaching in preschool settings. She said reentering the teaching setting inspired them to open a preschool in their church.

Ms. Kretlow explained that she and Ms. Kelley reached out to the church, and they eventually prepared a proposal that was approved by the governing board of the church, the Vestry, the prior spring. She said that they embarked on the special use permit process afterward.

Ms. Kretlow said that the preschool would be an extension of the church's ministry. She said that they did not embark on the venture to create a profitable business but rather intended to create a small, Christian-based education experience that prepared children for kindergarten. She said they would focus on Bible stories taught through the Montessori curriculum, "Godly Play," social and emotional learning, literacy, math, music, and art.

Ms. Kretlow said that they were committed to providing evidence-based, early-childhood education experiences that included small staff-to-student ratios and regular opportunities for families to interact in the school and in the community. She said she was able to answer specific curriculum questions. She said that there would be a maximum of 24 students across three classrooms, four teachers, and a half-day program from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. with an optional stay-and-play for lunch and additional childcare.

Ms. Kretlow stated that they estimated about 20% of the families would opt to use the stay-and-play. She said that they intended to serve families in the hyper-local area of Ivy and Crozet.

Mr. Bivins noted the demand for preschool and childcare in the County. He asked why the applicant had limited enrollment to 24 students and why the schedule was limited to a half-day.

Ms. Kretlow responded that one of the reasons for the decisions was that the Sunday School classroom space at St. Paul's had to be kept separate. She noted that the "Godly Play" curriculum had a lot of expensive materials that took effort to set up. She said that it would be difficult to share the space on a daily basis.

Ms. Kretlow said that they had two dedicated classrooms that could serve students that came two days, three days, or five days a week. She explained the half-day was in accordance with the

suggestions in the literature in terms of the attention span and activities that could be accomplished. She noted that in most preschools, the second half of the day was lunch, sleep, and play. She said that they wanted to encourage family involvement and did not want to only provide daycare services because they were focused on education.

Ms. Firehock said she attended the community meeting. She noted that there was already space in the existing building and that there was a proposed circulation pattern for the traffic. She noted that several schools in the area closed which increased the preschool demand.

Ms. Firehock noted there were no comments from the public. She closed the public hearing and brought the item back before the Commission.

Mr. Bivins noted that there was a need in the County. He mentioned a proposal from two weeks prior that had an enrollment of 35 students. He noted that the present proposal only had a 24-student enrollment. He encouraged the church to find a way to make a dent in the 24-student enrollment.

Ms. Firehock said that they could in the future after the program had been launched.

Mr. Bivins noted that St. Paul's was a church with talented individuals who could figure out how to solve multiple problems.

Ms. Firehock said that was not a request the Commission was making of the applicant this evening.

Ms. Firehock moved to recommend approval of SP202200018 St. Paul's Ivy Preschool with conditions as recommended in the staff report. Mr. Murray seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Adjournment

At 8:15 p.m., the Commission adjourned to November 22, 2022, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m. via electronic meeting.



Charles Rapp, Director of Planning

(Recorded by Carolyn S. Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning Boards; transcribed by Golden Transcription Services)

Approved by Planning Commission
Date: 11/22/2022

Initials: CSS