



ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

Project Name: SP201500024 The Field School of Charlottesville	Staff: Rachel Falkenstein, Senior Planner
Planning Commission Public Hearing: December 13, 2016	Board of Supervisors Hearing: To be determined
Owner(s): Aguilera LLC c/o Jay Fennell	Applicant(s): Todd Barnett, The Field School of Charlottesville
Acreage: 25.01 acres	Special Use Permit for: Private schools under section 10.2.2 of zoning ordinance
TMP: 06000-00-00-06800; 06000-00-00-068E0 Location: South side of Barracks Road, 400 feet southeast of the intersection with Colthurst Drive	Zoning/by-right use: RA Rural Areas
Magisterial District: Jack Jouett	Conditions: Yes
RA (Rural Areas): Yes	Requested # of Dwelling Units/Lots: N/A
Proposal: Construction of new private school for up to 150 students and up to 30,000 square feet of building footprint with associated play fields and parking.	Comp. Plan Designation: Rural Areas - preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources/residential density 0.5 unit/acre in development lots.
Character of Property: Currently vacant and mostly wooded property with a small pond and some areas of clearing and fill.	Use of Surrounding Properties: Large- and small-lot residences, farms, other open land, and forests. Colthurst subdivision is to the south and west.
Factors Favorable: 1. The defined building envelopes restrict land disturbance to mostly areas that were previously disturbed for the fill/waste use on site and leave the majority of the site undeveloped. 2. The site offers adequate infrastructure for the proposed use including access to public water and frontage on a major rural street in a location that would limit trip duration on the County's rural roadways. 3. The proposal would provide an additional school option for residents of the County.	Factors Unfavorable: 1. The use is more intense than most Rural Area uses and would generate more traffic than the by right uses permitted on the property. 2. The use would cause some impacts to scenic and natural resources in the Rural Area including disturbance to a portion of the critical slopes on site; however, most of the disturbance will to manmade slopes or already disturbed slopes. 3. The applicant is proposing to use a central sewerage system in the Rural Area; however, alternatives to a central system for the use would likely cause a greater environmental and visual impact.
Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the special use permit with conditions as outlined below.	

STAFF CONTACT:
PLANNING COMMISSION:
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Rachel Falkenstein, Senior Planner
June 21, 2016
TBD

PETITION:

PROJECT: SP201500024 Field School of Charlottesville

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Jack Jouett

TAX MAP/PARCEL: 06000000006800, 060000000068E0

LOCATION: South side of Barracks Road, west of the intersection with Montvue Drive

PROPOSAL: Construction of new private school for up to 150 students

PETITION: Private schools under section 10.2.2 of zoning ordinance; no dwellings proposed

ZONING: RA Rural Areas - agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential density (0.5 unit/acre in development lots)

ENTRANCE CORRIDOR: Yes

AIRPORT IMPACT AREA: Yes

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Rural Area – preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources; residential (0.5 unit/acre in development lots)

CHARACTER OF THE AREA:

The property consists of portions of two parcels totaling 25 acres. The site fronts on Barracks Road, west of the city of Charlottesville and just west of Neighborhood 7 of the Southern and Western Urban Neighborhoods Development Area. The property is mostly wooded but some areas of the site have been cleared. There is a 3-acre manmade pond fed by a stream on the property and the Water Protection Ordinance (WPO) designates a 100-foot buffer around the pond and stream.

The cleared areas of the site were part of a previous fill/waste site on the property. In 2006 a previous property owner obtained a permit to use the site for fill. However, a zoning violation was issued for this site once it was discovered that there was an accumulation of construction debris on the property consisting of metal and wire trash and other debris. The violation was determined to be officially abated in 2009. Areas of the site that were previously used for the fill activity remain mostly cleared and contain areas of manmade critical slopes.

There are two existing entrances to the site from Barracks Road. One of the entrances was formerly used to provide access to the fill site. The other entrance is gated and adjacent to the pond. This entrance is still used for maintenance of the dam and pond.

Neighboring properties are mostly single family detached residential lots. The Colthurst Farm subdivision (approximately 60 homes) is directly south and west of the property and consists of mostly 1-2 acre lots. Saint David's Anglican Church is adjacent to the property to the northwest. Parcels across Barracks Road are larger lot residential or open space/farm parcels. The Montvue subdivision is across Barracks Road to the east (Attachment A).

The property is zoned RA Rural Areas and the majority of the adjacent parcels are also zoned RA. A few parcels directly to the south are zoned PRD Planned Residential Development, but currently only contain one dwelling (Attachment B).

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY:

- WPO2006-0072 – A previous property owner received a permit to conduct fill/waste activity on TMP 60-68.
- Violation 2008-228 – The Zoning Administrator made an official determination of zoning violation that the accumulation of metal, wire trash and debris on the site constituted a junkyard. The

violation was abated in 2009.

- There have been a number of subdivision plats and boundary line adjustments associated with the property since 2000.

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY OF THE FIELD SCHOOL:

For the past several years, the Field School has been looking for a site to relocate from their existing facility in Crozet. The Field School currently rents a site in Crozet Park and they are seeking the stability associated with owning and developing a school site. According to the applicant, the school tried to relocate in the Development Areas of the County, but could not find any properties in the Development Areas that are large enough to accommodate the school facility within their budget. The applicant has said that parcel size and a natural setting are important for the school's outdoor curriculum

In 2013, the school made an application for a special use permit for a private school on another Rural Area property off of Polo Grounds Road. This application was not approved, amidst concerns about anticipated traffic delays on Polo Grounds Road and at the US29/Polo Grounds Road intersection.

The Field School staff and their representatives have met with staff on a number of other occasions to discuss potential locations for a school site in the Rural Areas. Staff was of the opinion that many of the sites proposed would not be appropriate sites for the proposed school, due to their location on narrow, Rural Area roadways, or other natural features and constraints associated with the sites.

The applicant chose the Barracks Road site because of the ability of Barracks Road to accommodate anticipated traffic, as well as the site's close proximity to the Development Areas.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL:

The applicant proposes to construct a private school on the property to provide schooling for up to 150 boys grades 5-8. The concept plan (Attachment C) shows the building and facility envelopes for the proposed school. The applicant has not yet completed a final design for the school, but has provided an exhibit demonstrating what the school use could look like (Attachment D).

The concept plan shows:

- A 4.3-acre school campus envelope for a total building footprint of no more than 30,000 square feet and a maximum single building footprint of 12,000 square feet.
- A 3.0-acre multi-purpose ballfield area.
- Buffer areas to help screen the use from adjacent properties.
- Areas to be preserved including a large portion of the existing woods, the existing pond and required WPO buffer.

The proposed campus and ballfield are located on the previous fill areas, which have already been mostly cleared. Part of the existing woods at the front of the site along Barracks road on the eastern portion of the property will be cleared for the use, though the applicant plans to maintain a buffer along Barracks Road consisting of existing trees and supplemental plantings where needed. The majority of the woods on this site located on the back (southern) portion of this site are to be preserved.

The regular hours of operation for the school will be between 9:00 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday for approximately 170 days of the year, with some additional summer school options available. The applicant anticipates approximately 15-20 after school sporting events which are typically over by 5:45 p.m. There is no lighting or amplified sound proposed for the athletic fields. An additional 10-12 evening school events are anticipated as well.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST

Section 33.8 of the Zoning Ordinance states that the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors shall reasonably consider the following factors when reviewing and acting upon an application for a special use permit:

No substantial detriment. The proposed special use will not be a substantial detriment to adjacent lots.

The nearest dwellings are within the Colthurst Farm neighborhood and are approximately 350 feet away from the edge of the building and sports fields envelopes. The applicant is proposing to maintain landscaped buffers on all sides of the site and is proposing to preserve the existing treeline around the pond and the southwestern property boundary to help screen the site and limit noise impacts.

At the community meeting for this request some neighbors expressed concerns about impacts of noise resulting from this use, particularly related to the sports fields. Maintaining the existing woods between the Colthurst Farm neighborhood and the proposed use and supplementing areas that are not currently vegetated with additional screening should help reduce noise impacts to neighboring properties. Since there is no proposed lighting of the sports fields and no amplified sounds, staff expects noise impacts to be limited and confined to daytime use only.

Nearby residents may be impacted by increased traffic on Barracks Road, but with the addition of turn lanes to the site, overall impacts to traffic on Barracks Road are expected to be minimal. See below for an assessment of traffic impacts.

Character of district unchanged. The character of the district will not be changed by the proposed special use.

The Rural Areas zoning district in this area is characterized by mostly small and large lot residential uses and a few parcels that appear to be dedicated to agricultural and or open space uses. The proposed school use will be more intense than the neighboring uses but is not expected to impact the other Rural Area uses in a significant way since the applicant is proposing to buffer and screen the use from all adjacent properties using existing vegetation and supplemental landscaping where needed.

Though the exact design and configuration of the school development is unknown at this time, staff believes that allowing flexibility by only showing the building envelopes and providing commitments to building sizes on the concept plan is the best approach. Since the site is along an Entrance Corridor, the final design of the site is expected to be in compliance with Entrance Corridor Design Guidelines and will require approval from the Architectural Review Board.

Harmony. The proposed special use will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter.

The proposed special use permit will allow for the expansion of an existing private school in a new location in the County. One of the stated purposes of the Zoning Ordinance is to facilitate the provision of adequate police and fire protection, disaster evacuation, civil defense, transportation, water, sewerage, flood protection, schools, parks, forests, playgrounds, recreational facilities, airports and other public requirements. Even though the proposed school is a private facility, it would provide an additional school option for County residents.

...with the uses permitted by right in the district

The property has a single development right, which would be used to create an approximately 6-acre development lot for residential use through a boundary line adjustment. The remaining school parcel would be greater than 21 acres and does not require a development right. Because of this, it is

unlikely that if this property were to develop to a by right use that it would develop more intensely than the proposed school.

The uses permitted by right in the RA zoning district support agriculture, forestry, and land conservation, and permit residential uses. The school use would be more intense than most by right uses permitted in the RA district because of traffic and the activities associated with the 150-student middle school. However, the proposed school would only use a portion, approximately 8 acres, of a 25-acre site for the school use and related infrastructure. The remaining acreage of the site would be preserved. Preserving environmental features on the property is in harmony with by right uses in the district and would limit overall land disturbance to only the portion of the site most suited to development.

...with the regulations provided in section 5 as applicable.

There are no supplemental regulations in section 5 applicable to this use.

...and with the public health, safety and general welfare.

The applicant proposes to use the existing entrance constructed for access to the fill site for the school. The applicant plans to retain the second entrance to this site to allow access to the dam and pond for maintenance. The dam entrance will remain gated and will not be available for access to the school facility.

Though a traffic study was not required for this request, the applicant provided data demonstrating anticipated traffic impacts derived from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). The numbers indicate a private school with an enrollment of 150 students will generate approximately 372 daily trips. Barracks Road, between Old Garth Road and Georgetown Road, is classified by VDOT as Major Collector with an average daily trip count of about 6,000 vehicle trips per day. It is not expected that the addition of the school use will have a significant impact on traffic on this road. VDOT is requiring that the applicant build turn lanes in both directions off of Barracks Road at the entrance to the school.

Neighbors have expressed concerns about the traffic generated by this use and the safety of a school entrance at this location on Barracks Road with a 50 mph speed limit. Staff is of the opinion that with the addition of turn lanes, the proposed use would be acceptable in this location and not be a detriment to public health, safety or general welfare. The site has adequate frontage and site distance to provide needed turn lanes and VDOT reviewers have no objection to the proposed use or the entrance location as shown.

In addition, the Field School currently uses a bus service to provide transportation to and from the school for many of its students and plans to continue to do so if their facility is relocated to this site. If a bus service is provided, daily traffic counts should be lower for the proposed use; however, it is difficult to determine what, if any, impact the bussing will have on traffic numbers as there is no commitment to any specific level of bus ridership for the proposed use.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. The use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan designates the property as Rural Areas which calls for the preservation and protection of agricultural, forestal, open space and natural, historic and scenic resources and allows for a density of 0.5 units per acre on development lots.

The proposed school does not actively support agricultural or forestal uses, and would require some impacts on natural and scenic resources. In addition, once built, the school would likely prohibit the future use of the site for agricultural, forestry or open space uses. However, the defined extent of

development on the site will limit the area of land disturbance to only a portion of the site and will help to protect natural resources in areas not designated for development such as existing woods, areas of critical slopes and the pond, stream and WPO buffer.

Staff is of the opinion that due to the location of the property, nearby uses, proximity to the Development area, and the available infrastructure, the location proposed is more suitable than most Rural Area sites for the proposed private school use. The surrounding area has developed into a suburban pattern of development consisting of small lot subdivisions of Colthurst Farm and Montvue. The natural features of the site have already been partially disturbed and cleared for the previous fill activity, and due to the impacts caused by this fill, it is unlikely that the property will be used in the near future for agricultural or forestry uses. The site is just over 1000 feet from the Development Area boundary, thus limiting the distance that users would have to drive on Rural Area roadways to access the site and the property is located on a major rural street that is designed to safely handle the anticipated traffic impacts and the needed turn lane improvements. Additionally, this site is located in the Albemarle County Service Authority jurisdictional area for public water allowing for a connection to public water rather than relying on well water and impacting groundwater resources in the area.

While the proposed school is not directly supportive of Comprehensive Plan goals, it is no less supportive than some by right uses within the Rural Areas such as small lot subdivisions, which are a common development pattern in the vicinity of the proposed school.

SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST

The applicant requested a special exception to allow for the disturbance of critical slopes on the site (Attachment F). Planning Commission action is not required for the special exception request; however, the Board may consider a recommendation by the Planning Commission.

The applicant is proposing to disturb 0.85 acres of existing critical slopes to allow for the construction of a new turn lane on Barracks road, a commercial entrance, a ballfield area and an area for overflow parking near the school. According to the applicant 80% of the slopes to be disturbed are manmade slopes created either by the construction of the existing entrance to the site or by the abandoned waste area for construction debris.

The existing entrance is a narrow gravel drive that does not meet commercial entrance standards and would need to be widened for the proposed school entrance. Doing so would cause impacts to slopes that were created in the construction of the existing entrance. The proposed entrance location would cause the least amount of disturbance to slopes on site, as nearly the entire frontage to the site is obstructed by critical slopes. The majority of the additional proposed disturbances to slopes are to manmade slopes along Barracks Road or slopes setback just off of the roadway in an area that was previously used for the fill area on the site. Some minor disturbances to non-manmade slope towards the southern portion of the site are also proposed to allow for the grading of the ballfield area.

Engineering staff has reviewed the request and has no objection to the proposed critical slope disturbances. Since the majority of the slopes are manmade, staff believes that strict application of the requirements of Section 4.2 regarding preservation of critical slopes would not forward the purposes of this chapter or otherwise serve the public health, safety or welfare. Staff recommends that the special exception for the disturbance of critical slopes be approved by the Board with the condition that any land disturbing activity located within the critical slopes comply with the Design Standards of Section 30.7.5 of the Zoning Ordinance. This would prevent the creation of additional manmade steep slopes on site and require that any resulting slopes be more gradual and natural in appearance.

REQUEST FOR CENTRAL SEWERAGE SYSTEM:

The applicant is also requesting approval of a central sewerage system for the school use (Attachment G), which requires approval from the Board. This approval does not require action of the Planning Commission. The proposed system would consist of a sewer lateral system, collecting waste from three buildings along with a distribution box and drainfield as seen on the attached exhibit (Attachment D). The plans identify an area for a primary drainfield and two reserve drainfields.

Section 16 of the County Code defines a central sewerage system as a system designed to serve three or more connections. Primary users of central systems are public schools and campgrounds in the Rural Area. Though they have not completed a final design for the private school layout, the applicant anticipates building three separate structures on site: an academic building, a gymnasium and a dining hall. While the three building connections are for one overall use, they are considered a central system requiring Board approval.

Use of central sewage systems in the Rural Area is discouraged due to the potential of a proliferation of residential uses using a central system or the potential for uses that should be in the Development Area to locate in the Rural Area. They also have a tendency to promote development of a higher intensity. The Board of Supervisors must hold a public hearing on requests for central water or sewer systems and alternatives to central systems are encouraged. As part of any request, applicants must provide a justification.

There are several alternatives available to the applicant to avoid the need for the central system. One alternative is to provide two or three separate systems, each with its own distribution box and primary and reserve drainfield. This alternative would create a greater area of land disturbance on site because of the need to construct two or three separate primary and reserve drainfields as well as result in a higher cost and need for maintenance by the owner.

Another alternative available to the applicant would be to limit the school infrastructure to only one or two buildings. The applicant's justification for the three building layout is to provide a campus setting for the students requiring them to transport themselves from one setting to another, which the applicant has stated is an integral part of their approach to education. If the applicant were to only construct one or two buildings it would increase the maximum building footprint to a size much larger than the proposed 12,000 square feet. One or two larger buildings would increase the visual and scenic impacts on the site and the school would likely be more visible from surrounding properties and the Entrance Corridor. Three smaller buildings of no more than 12,000 square feet are more in keeping with the scale and size of other Rural Area uses and will be easier to screen from surrounding properties.

Staff reviews requests such as this for conformity with the Comprehensive Plan and also for technical feasibility. The County Engineer has reviewed this request and has no objection to the design and location of the proposed system. County Engineer and Health Department approval of the final system specifications will be required prior to construction. Regarding conformity with the Comprehensive Plan, staff believes that allowing the central system in this case will result in fewer impacts to scenic and natural resources and create a better site design. Usage and capacity of the sewerage system would not change for the centralized system but will allow for three smaller buildings, which will be less visually intrusive to the Rural Area and will reduce land disturbance. For this reason, staff is supportive of the request and recommends approval of the proposed central sewerage lateral system for three buildings, as shown on Attachment D.

SUMMARY:

Staff has identified factors which are favorable and unfavorable to this proposal:

Factors favorable to this request include:

1. The defined building envelopes restrict land disturbance to mostly areas that were previously disturbed for the fill/waste use on site and leave the majority of the site undeveloped.
2. The site offers adequate infrastructure for the proposed use including access to public water and frontage on a major rural street in a location that would limit trip duration on the County's rural roadways.
3. The proposal would provide an additional school option for residents of the County.

Factors unfavorable to this request include:

1. The use is more intense than most Rural Area uses and would generate more traffic than the by right uses permitted on the property.
2. The use would cause some impacts to scenic and natural resources in the Rural Area including disturbance to a portion of the critical slopes on site; however, most of the disturbance will to manmade slopes or already disturbed slopes.
3. The applicant is proposing to use a central sewer system in the Rural Area; however, alternatives to a central system for the use would likely cause a greater environmental and visual impact.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Based on the findings described in this staff report and factors identified as favorable, staff recommends approval of the SP amendment, **SP 2015-24 The Field School of Charlottesville**, with the following conditions:

1. Development of the use shall be in general accord with sheet 4 of the concept plan entitled "Special Use Concept Plan for Field School of Charlottesville" prepared by Shimp Engineering, P.C., revision #5, dated 10/12/16, as determined by the Director of Planning and the Zoning Administrator. To be in general accord with the concept plan, the development and use shall reflect the following major elements as shown on the concept plan:
 - a. Locations of buildings and sports fields within the indicated envelopes
 - b. Maximum total building footprint of 30,000 square feet
 - c. Maximum footprint of 12,000 square feet for any single building
 - d. Preservation and installation of tree buffers as indicated
 - e. Preservation of wooded areas and slopes outside of building and sports field envelopes as indicated

Minor modifications to the plan which are in general accord with the elements above may be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance. Modifications are to be considered in terms of minimizing or improving impacts on adjoining properties and roadways. Buildings and parking may be developed in phases.

2. The maximum enrollment shall be 150 students.
3. Classroom instruction shall not begin before 8:00 a.m. and shall not continue later than 5:00 p.m. These hours shall not apply to sports events. Classes shall not be held on Saturday or Sunday.
4. Non-sporting, school related events with more than 50 attendees shall not occur on site more than 12 times per calendar year and attendance shall not exceed 200 persons. The facility shall not be used for events not related to the school use.
5. No construction for the use shall begin without written approval of the proposed septic facilities from the Virginia Department of Health
6. No outdoor lighting of sports fields shall be installed for this use.
7. There shall be no outdoor amplified sound associated with this use.
8. Any new outdoor lighting shall be only full cut-off fixtures and shielded to reflect light away from all abutting properties. A lighting plan limiting light levels at the property lines to no greater than 0.3 foot candles shall be submitted to the Zoning Administrator or her designee for approval.

9. If the construction of the private school for which this Special Use Permit is issued is not commenced by [insert date 5 years after the date the County Board approval of the Special Use Permit], the permit shall be deemed abandoned and the authority granted there under shall thereupon terminate.

MOTIONS:

- A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:
I move to recommend approval of SP 2015-24 The Field School of Charlottesville with the conditions outlined in the staff report.
- B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:
I move to recommend denial of SP 2015-24 The Field School of Charlottesville (state reasons for denial).

ATTACHMENTS

- A – [Location map](#)
B – [Zoning map](#)
C – [Concept plan](#)
D – [Project exhibit](#)
E – [Project narrative](#)
F – [Critical slopes waiver request](#)
G – [Central sewerage system request](#)