

ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

Project Name: SP202400005 Tandem Friends School Increased Enrollment	Staff: Syd Shoaf, Senior Planner
Planning Commission Hearing: May 28, 2024	Board of Supervisors Public Hearing: To be scheduled
Owner: The Tandem School	Applicant: Michelle Schlesinger, Associate Head of School for Tandem Friends School and Kendra Moon, Line and Grade
Acreage: 24.51 acres	Special Use Permit: Section 13.2.2.5 for a private school.
TMP: 09100-00-00-002A0 Location: 279 Tandem Lane	By-right use: R-1 Residential - 1 unit/acre
Magisterial District: Scottsville	Conditions: Yes EC: Yes
Proposal: Request to amend previously approved Special Use Permit SP201900007 to permit an increase in the student enrollment of a private school from 250 to 400 students.	Comp. Plan Designation: Neighborhood Density Residential – residential (3-6 units/acre); supporting uses such as places of worship, schools, public and institutional uses and small-scale neighborhood serving retail and commercial; in Neighborhood 4 in the Southern and Western Urban Neighborhoods Master Plan area.
DA (Development Area): Neighborhood 4	Requested # of Dwelling Units: 0
Character of Property: The property is currently developed as a private school campus, the Tandem Friends School, with several school buildings and athletic fields.	Use of Surrounding Properties: Surrounding properties to the north include Monticello High School, Monticello Fire Rescue Station to the west, and R-1 residential zoned properties to the south which includes land owned by the County or County School Board.
Factors Favorable: 1. Consistent with the review criteria for special use permits contained in the Zoning Ordinance. 2. The use is consistent with the Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan.	Factors Unfavorable: 1. The proposed increase in enrollment will generate additional traffic on Avon Street, Mill Creek Drive, and Scottsville Road.
Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of SP202400005 Tandem Friends School Increased Enrollment with conditions.	

STAFF PERSON:
PLANNING COMMISSION:
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Syd Shoaf, Senior Planner
May 28, 2024
To be scheduled

PETITION:

PROJECT: SP202400005 Tandem Friends School Increased Enrollment

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Scottsville

TAX MAP/PARCEL: 09100-00-00-002A0

LOCATION: 279 Tandem Lane

PROPOSAL: Request to amend previously approved Special Use Permit SP201900007 to permit an increase in the student enrollment of a private school from 250 to 400 students, at an existing private school campus on a parcel of approx. 24.51 acres.

PETITION: Private school, in accordance with Section 13.2.2.5 of the Zoning Ordinance. No dwelling units proposed.

ZONING: R-1 Residential – 1 unit per acre

OVERLAY DISTRICT(S): EC – Entrance Corridor Overlay District; AIA – Airport Impact Area Overlay District; and Steep Slopes – Managed

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Neighborhood Density Residential – residential (3-6 units/acre); supporting uses such as places of worship, schools, public and institutional uses and small-scale neighborhood serving retail and commercial; in Neighborhood 4 in the Southern and Western Urban Neighborhoods Master Plan area.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The subject property is located at 279 Tandem Lane, south of the City of Charlottesville. The site is developed and contains existing school buildings and athletic fields (Attachment 1 – Existing Conditions Map).

The surrounding properties are mostly institutional uses. Monticello High School is located to the north, directly across Mill Creek Drive from the Tandem Friends School. To the west is the Monticello Fire Rescue Station. There are additional County-owned or County School Board-owned properties, zoned R-1, to the south of the site (Attachment 2 – Zoning Map). These parcels are largely wooded, with a single-family home located on a County-owned property. Nearby to the east are apartments.

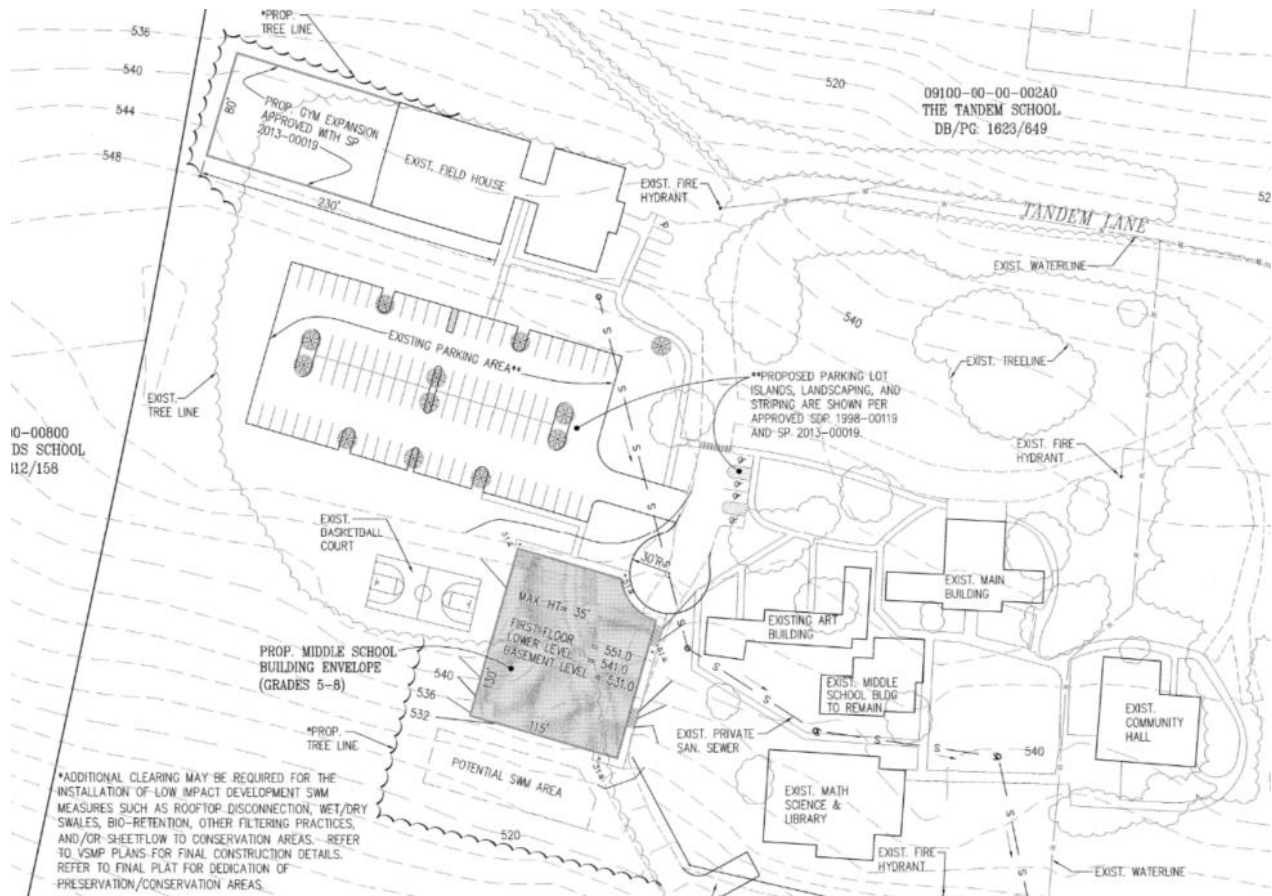
PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY

There have been numerous special use permits approved since the school use began in 1972.

- SP197000077 – Original SP that allowed the school in this location; approved in 1972.
- SP199600006 – Request for a 10,000 square foot Community Hall for the school; approved in 1996.
- SP199600025 – Request for an increase in total enrollment and staffing from 177 to 200; approved in 1996.
- SP199600049 – Request for a 15,000 square foot field house and gymnasium; approved in 1996.
- SP199700053 – Request for a 14,000 square foot math and science building; approved in 1998.
- SP200800065 – Request to add a classroom trailer to the site; approved in 2009.
- SP201300019 – Request to replace an 8,000 square foot gym building with an 18,400 square foot field house and to increase student enrollment to 250; approved in 2014.
- SP201500021 – Request for a two-story middle school building with a 15,000 square foot footprint; approved in 2016.
- SP201900007 – Request for a 4,500 square foot pavilion-type building for dining and meeting space; approved in 2020.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

The applicant has requested to amend the previously approved special use permit (SP201900007) to increase student enrollment from 250 to 400 students (Attachment 3 – Applicant Narrative). There are no site plan changes with this application and according to the applicant's narrative, the current built facilities can accommodate an additional capacity for another 100 students. Furthermore, if student enrollment reaches approximately 350 students, the school will need to build a new school building to accommodate the additional students. This new school building would be in the approximate location that was approved with SP201500021 for a two-story approximately 15,000 square foot footprint building. This building is shown below (and in Attachment 4 – Applicant Conceptual Plan) and labeled as “Prop. Middle School Building Envelope (Grades 5-8).



COMMUNITY MEETING

The required community meeting for the proposal was held at the 5th and Avon Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting at the Fifth Street County Office Building on Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 7 pm. The applicant shared details and answered questions regarding the proposal to members of the CAC and members of the public who were present. There were several questions regarding traffic.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST:

Special Use Permits are evaluated under reasonable standards, based on zoning principles which include the proposal's compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. Any impacts caused by the proposal may be addressed through conditions which must be reasonably related and roughly proportional to the impacts.

Section 33.8(A) states that the Commission, in making its recommendation, shall consider the following factors:

1. No substantial detriment. Whether the proposed special use will be a substantial detriment to adjacent parcels

The school is buffered from surrounding properties and adjacent uses are primarily non-residential. There are conditions of approval for the school that limit outdoor amplified sound, which ensures no detriment to the nearby residential development to the east.

2. Character of the nearby area is unchanged. Whether the character of the adjacent parcels and the nearby area will be changed by the proposed special use.

The school has been in operation since 1972 and the increased enrollment would not change the character of the adjacent parcels or nearby area.

3. Harmony. Whether the proposed special use will be harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter,

The R1 Residential zoning district is intended for low density residential development in community areas and the urban areas. The district recognizes the existence of previously established low density residential districts in communities and the urban areas. It also provides incentives for clustering of development and provision of locational, environmental and developmental amenities. The institutional use of a private school is allowed by special use permit.

The school has existed on this site since 1972. The proposed amendment would keep the same use, which is supportive of the residential uses permitted by right in this district. The increased enrollment does not change the use and is in harmony with the purpose and intent of the district. The proposal will not significantly change the impact of the use (with the recommended conditions) or its consistency with the purpose and intent of the ordinance.

with the uses permitted by right in the district,

The proposed increase in enrollment will not affect the by-right uses in the district on this property or adjacent properties.

with the regulations provided in Section 5 as applicable,

This section is not applicable to this proposal.

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

The public health, safety, and general welfare of the community are protected throughout the special use permit process, which assures that the proposed use is appropriate in the location requested. Zoning, Engineering, Building Inspections, the Architectural Review Board (ARB), Transportation Planning, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Albemarle County Fire Rescue, Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) and Albemarle County Service Authority (ACSA) have all reviewed this application and have provided no objections.

If the special use permit is approved, the use cannot commence without the appropriate site development plans, building permits, and zoning clearances. These processes will ensure that all

State and County regulations, special use permit conditions, and all necessary building and fire inspections have been approved.

Regarding transportation, the Tandem Friends School's main entrance is at the entrance of Tandem Lane and Independence Way with Mill Creek Drive. The school utilizes the main entrance for traffic in the morning and afternoon. There is another entrance southeast of the main entrance which is utilized in the afternoon for vehicles exiting the property. Both Tandem and Monticello High School have left and right turn lanes at their entrance. Mill Creek Drive also has bike lanes.

Currently, Tandem Friends School mitigates traffic impacts by splitting the cost with Monticello High School to pay for a police officer to manage traffic at the intersection of Tandem Lane and Independence Lane with Mill Creek Drive in both the mornings and afternoons. Additionally, Tandem Friends School's utilization of the southeast entrance from the main entrance for afternoon departure alleviates traffic impacts in the afternoon. However, the southeast entrance could potentially be utilized in the morning to offset the traffic impact at the Tandem Lane and Independence Way with Mill Creek Drive intersection.

Furthermore, Tandem Friends School's staggered morning start on Fridays could be implemented on other days of the week. The applicant has provided in the narrative that they will explore staggered start days on other days of the week if the capacity reaches greater than 350 students. The increased enrollment could lead to more students attending the school that may be carpooling, families with multiple students or students of staff at Tandem. Tandem Friends School does not provide buses for students and there are not any public bus routes in this area.

The addition of 150 students on the site would impact traffic in the area and the applicant has provided an Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Analysis (Attachment 3 – Applicant Narrative). Across Mill Creek Drive is Monticello High School and a site plan is under review to construct a new elementary school on Founders Place, which would exit onto Mill Creek Drive in the future. The ITE Trip Generation analysis indicates that with the current enrollment of up to 250 students, the morning peak hours are the most traffic intensive with about 214 vehicles. The peak traffic hours coincide with Monticello High School's peak traffic hours across the street. Currently, the start times for the two schools are 25 minutes apart Monday through Thursday, with Tandem having a staggered start time on Fridays where vehicles arrive between 7:30 to 8:45 a.m. If the special use permit were to be approved to increase capacity to up to 400 students, the morning peak traffic hours would increase to 328 vehicles and would have a total of roughly 992 vehicles per day.

The applicant has indicated if a site plan is submitted for the future building construction that was approved with SP201500021, they would conduct another traffic analysis to ensure that the turn lanes are adequate and expect that would be completed before increasing enrollment beyond 350 students. Staff recommends a requirement that hours must be staggered with Monticello High School.

4. *Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Whether the proposed special use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.*

The Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan designates the subject property for this proposal as Neighborhood Density Residential and is located in Neighborhood 4 of the Comprehensive Plan. The Neighborhood Density Residential designation allows residential uses as primary uses, as well as, supporting uses such as places of worship, schools, public and institutional uses, and small-scale neighborhood serving retail and commercial uses. As a

school, this use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and no change in the type of use on this site is proposed.

SUMMARY

Staff has identified the following factor favorable to this request:

1. Consistent with the review criteria for special use permits contained in the Zoning Ordinance.
2. The use is consistent with the Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan.

Staff has identified the following factor which is unfavorable to this request:

1. The proposed increase in enrollment will generate additional traffic on Avon Street, Mill Creek Drive, and Scottsville Road.

RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the findings contained in this staff report, staff recommends approval of SP202400005 Tandem Friends School Increased Enrollment with the following draft conditions:

1. The development of the use shall be in general accord with the concept plan entitled “SUP Amendment Concept Plan – Resubmission”, prepared by Train Architects, dated 09 December 2019, and last revised 10 December 2019, as determined by the Director of Planning and the Zoning Administrator. To be in general accord with the specific plan, development and use shall reflect the following major elements as shown on the plan:
 - a. Building orientation
 - b. Building size (including height)
 - c. Location of buildings, with the exception of the Middle School, which may be shifted to maintain the existing second means of access
 - d. Limits of disturbance
 - e. Parking lot layout and landscaping

Minor modifications to the plan which do not conflict with the elements above may be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

2. Additional buildings may only be authorized by a new special use permit.
3. Total school enrollment shall not exceed four hundred (400) students.
4. Amplified sound from the pavilion will be subject to maximum sound level regulations as provided in Chapter 18-4.18.04. Amplified sound is prohibited between 10:00 p.m. each Sunday through Thursday night and 7:00 a.m. the following morning, and between 11:00 p.m. each Friday and Saturday night and 7:00 a.m. the following morning. Unamplified sound will be subject to the maximum sound level regulations, as provided in Chapter 18-4.18.05 (N).
5. Student pick-up and drop-off times must be staggered by 15 minutes or more with pick-up and drop-off times at Monticello High School.

POSSIBLE PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS:

A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:

I move to recommend approval of SP202400005 Tandem Friends School Increased Enrollment with the conditions stated in the staff report.

B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:

Move to recommend denial of SP202400005 Tandem Friends School Increased Enrollment.
Should a commissioner motion to recommend denial, he or she should state the reason(s) for recommending denial.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Existing Conditions Map

Attachment 2 – Zoning Map

Attachment 3 – Applicant Narrative

Attachment 4 – Applicant Conceptual Plan