UVA Foundation Golf Facility: Staff Summary of Historic Preservation Issues
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- Birdwood should be considered as a cultural landscape in which the parts comprise a greater whole. As such, more than just the Birdwood Pavilion is important; it is the whole assemblage of primary and secondary buildings, structures, and landscape features that embodies the historic landscape.
- Birdwood is a cultural landscape of historic significance that has remained intact for nearly 200 years. This proposal will intrude upon that landscape's integrity and the integrity of a historic site may be at least diminished if not lost; in conjunction, the historic site's significance may be diminished by the intrusion. The parking lot will be built atop undeveloped ground; potential, undiscovered archaeological resources might be lost. And, at the same time that this proposed development will impact previously undisturbed ground at the heart of a historic complex, it also will sever the visual connection between the house and its curtilage with the nearby historic farm complex.
- Birdwood is a layered landscape with different periods of significance. However, each period of significance is equally important and should not be compared or contrasted hierarchically.
- The historic farm complex, which this proposal affects, is composed of vernacular, utilitarian buildings. However, it is very much an integral element within the designed landscape, and those buildings exhibit a deliberate aesthetic intention and spatial relationship (between each other and vis-à-vis Birdwood Pavilion). Birdwood was a plantation that was lightly transformed, in the Country Estate era of the early 20th century, into an Ornamental Farm. This designed landscape trope was derived from the 18th century English Landscape Garden tradition; ornamental farms attempted to aestheticize working agricultural landscapes, and as such barns, sheds, and stables were designed purposefully within sight of the manor house to create reciprocal vistas (visual connections) and a picturesque backdrop for the gentleman's estate.
- The placement of the proposed parking lot lies within 115 feet of Birdwood Pavilion's southwestern dependency (built between 1819-1830), thus encroaching upon and potentially impacting the heart of this historic plantation. Furthermore, it will disrupt the visual connection between Birdwood Pavilion and the historic farm complex and vegetative screening may sever further that visual connection.
- Over the course of the project, UVAF representatives have expressed multiple reasons for wishing to relocate the proposed facility to the present location. These reasons range from respecting the integrity of the historic precinct to conformity with the UVAF's master plan for Birdwood. County staff has not been given access to the master plan and can neither substantiate nor verify the legitimacy of the reasons for the request to move the facility from its previously approved location.
- County staff have offered alternative locations for the proposed parking along Golf Course Drive, which UVAF representatives have stated have been exhaustively considered and rejected in their master planning process. One reason given for not positioning the parking so that it abuts Golf Course Drive (which would remove the need for an access drive or parking on the historic precinct) is that the UVAF wishes to keep the bucolic, agrarian character of Golf Course Drive intact. This inappropriately prioritizes a 1984 private road over an 1819-1953 landscape that has remained largely intact for the last half-century.
- UVAF representatives have stated that the existing asphalt parking pad north of the Carriage House can hold 12 vehicles, and that the UVA golf teams fluctuate between 8-14 members annually. Non-impervious, temporary or over-flow parking that would not expand the imperviousness of the existing parking pad could reduce impacts. If there is a desire to keep the infrastructure agrarian in character, other materials besides asphalt should be considered.