



ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING

STAFF REPORT UPDATES SINCE JULY 25 PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION

August 3, 2017

GENERAL UPDATES:

1. During the July 25 Work Session of the Albemarle County Planning Commission (PC), County staff articulated their analysis and resulting recommendation ("staff cannot recommend approval of the special use permit until historic preservation impacts have been resolved"). After a thorough presentation from the applicants, and after extensive discussion among Commissioners, staff, and applicants, Commissioner Keller provided concluding remarks which included:
 - a. comments that it is great to have an applicant who values stewardship and who is responsive, and great to have County staff with relevant knowledge;
 - b. an acknowledgment that, over time, successful universities typically require change and growth of their institutional programs and facilities;
 - c. a reflection that open and honest discussion, both up front and throughout the permitting process, is the most conducive approach to achieving positive outcomes; and
 - d. a statement of hopeful attitude that applicants and staff would be able to work together to reach agreement on outstanding issues in a short time.

In the ensuing period of time between the PC Work Session and staff report deadline, County staff and applicants have diligently worked together to explore various possibilities and to attempt to reach consensus on conceptual site planning and historic preservation issues. This staff report update attempts to summarize that process, as well as provide updated staff analysis and recommendations which reflect the latest efforts and information.

2. The Legal Ad for notification of public hearing has been updated and properly re-advertised with the following language:

PROPOSAL: Amend SP2015-19 to construct a 2 story, 14,000 sq. ft. building addition, use three existing smaller structures, and provide associated parking and infrastructure for an indoor/outdoor golf practice facility for use by University of Virginia golf teams, Birdwood members, and Boar's Head Resort guests. The proposed location of this facility is approximately 400 feet to the west of the previously approved location and is adjacent to the existing Birdwood Golf Course.

3. Written comments from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) were received by County staff on Friday, July 21. (Please see Attachment 1) Mr. Marc C. Wagner, Architectural Historian with DHR's Eastern Region Preservation Office, provided detailed analysis of the applicant's original proposal ("Illustrative Site Plan" dated June 14, 2017) that noted the following:
 - a. The proposed indoor golf practice facility would be "more compatible than the 2015 design."
 - b. The adaptive reuse concepts are valuable; DHR "applauded the idea of putting the historic buildings back into service."
 - c. The proposed parking layout and screening methods are "acceptable."
 - d. Overall, DHR is "satisfied that the new construction would not impose itself significantly to alter the historic feeling of Birdwood," and that "if the project is built as planned, it will not trigger the need to reconsider the eligibility of the Birdwood listing" on the National Register of Historic Places.

(Note: County receipt of DHR comments resulted in the elimination of one of the unfavorable factors identified in the original staff report. DHR comments clarify that the proposed project, as originally presented, would not threaten the property's eligibility for continued inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.)

TIMELINE OF RECENT COORDINATION PROCESS:

The applicants (University of Virginia Foundation / UVAF) and County staff have been engaged in frequent communication throughout the time period between the July 25 PC Work Session and the August 3 deadline for this staff report update. This coordination includes the following activities:

- July 25: PC Work Session
- July 27: Meeting with UVAF and County staff for detailed discussion of conceptual site planning possibilities
- July 27: UVAF provides Options A–F as conceptual CAD drawings; UVAF flags Options E and F on site
- July 27: UVAF asks staff to refrain from conducting site visit(s); staff oblige
- July 28: Staff provide “Alternative Option B” concept sketches to UVAF for consideration and discussion
- August 1: Meeting with UVAF and County staff to further discuss and evaluate conceptual site planning possibilities; UVAF provides large-format “Birdwood Golf Course Concept Plan”
- August 2: UVAF hosts County staff for site visit to Birdwood

(Note: County receipt of the Birdwood Golf Course Concept Plan resulted in the elimination of one of the unfavorable factors identified in the original staff report. That Concept Plan, as well as UVAF's detailed explanation of the possible future concepts contained therein, helped staff to more clearly understand the current proposal within the broader context of the potential future uses of the 544-acre property.)

UPDATED STAFF ANALYSIS – EVALUATION OF OPTIONS A-F: (Please see Attachments A-F)

Option A sites the parking lot in a location that would be “relegated” when viewed from within the Historic Core. UVAF indicated this Option would not be feasible or safe due to the flight path of golf balls to/from the driving range, practice tees, and/or hitting bays.

Option B sites the parking lot outside the historic core and adjacent to Golf Course Drive, in a location consistent with the recommendation made by the Albemarle County Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) on June 24. However, as presented and discussed on July 27, Option B only represented a change in the parking lot location without much site-specific modification to the parking lot configuration or size.

In an attempt to clarify the alternate approach that staff envisioned when requesting UVAF evaluation of this location, staff provided UVAF with sketch drawings of an “Alternate Option B” on July 28. (Please see Attachment G) This concept utilized a single-loaded parking lot in between Golf Course Drive and the Brick Barn, inclusive of landscape screening along Golf Course Drive as well as retention of the existing landform around the Brick Barn. This concept attempted to offer a hybrid solution that combined the favorable characteristics of Option A and Option B. UVAF expressed a lack of support for the Alternate Option B concept, due primarily to their stated concerns about how such a layout would visually impact the complex of historic buildings as viewed from Golf Course Drive.

Option C sites the parking lot in a location that had not previously been proposed or evaluated. After having the opportunity to conduct a site visit on Wednesday, August 2, staff concluded that Option C would be an improvement over the original proposed layout: it creates less visual impact to the historic landscape as viewed from Birdwood Pavilion and from Golf Course Drive; and it would accomplish the applicant's stated goals of providing an adequate number of safe parking spaces proximate to the indoor golf practice facility. However, staff have also concluded that this location (like Option D, the original proposed location) does not minimize impacts to the intact historic landscape of the Birdwood curtilage, or fully address HPC and staff interests to carefully preserve the historic resources.

Option D is the original proposed location and layout. Detailed staff analysis of this option is contained in the staff report prepared for the July 25 Work Session. Staff continue to have significant concerns about the impacts to historic resources – and as a result, do not support Option D.

Option E is a variation of the original proposed location. It reconfigures the parking lot to be single-loaded, which reduces the width of the parking lot in an attempt to maximize the effectiveness of the grading and hedge screening as mitigation techniques. However, the reduced width increases the parking lot length, which increases its proximity to the western dependencies. As a result, staff do not support Option E.

Option F is a second variation of the original proposed location. It shifts the parking lot to the west, farther from the Pavilion and southwest dependency, but very close to the Brick Barn. It also includes a drive aisle in the same location/configuration as Option D. Due to the proximity to the Brick Barn and the drive aisle remaining in proximity to Birdwood Pavilion, staff do not support Option F.

Broader consideration of all six Options provided the following observations:

- Of the six (6) options, only three (3) represent parking lot locations that would be substantially distinct from the original proposed location. Options E and F both generally site the parking lot between Birdwood Pavilion and the Brick Barn; Option D is the original proposed location.
- Few options provide any variation on parking lot configuration or size (number of spaces). None of the options incorporate a strategy to reduce the number of parking spaces by utilizing golf cart paths to access existing parking spaces located elsewhere on Birdwood Golf. Only Options E and F represent a reconfigured or resized parking lot, and those options generally do not seem to be preferred or supported by either the applicants or County staff.
- All new Options (A, B, C, E, and F) appear to retain the existing asphalt parking area adjacent to the Carriage House in its entirety for reuse as additional parking spaces. Option D (original concept) does not include full retention/reuse of this existing feature. Staff recognize the value of partially retaining this existing feature to provide universally accessible parking spaces; staff would also support reduction or partial removal of this existing feature.

Of the six options, County staff gave the most consideration to Options B, C, and D, as summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. Comparison of Three Parking Lot Location Options Discussed by Staff and Applicants.

	Option D (Original Concept)	“Alternate” Option B	Option C
Pros:	This location addresses UVAF priorities of student safety, proximity to the facility, and relegation off of Golf Course Drive	This location addresses County concerns about avoiding adverse impacts to intact historic resources	This location addresses UVAF priorities of student safety, proximity to the facility, and relegation off of Golf Course Drive
Cons:	This location adversely impacts the integrity of intact historic resources	This location adversely impacts the views and arrival sequence from Golf Course Drive, and would require substantial screening and additional engineering	This location may adversely impact the views and arrival sequence from Golf Course Drive; This location impacts the integrity of intact historic resources, albeit to a lesser degree than Option D
Other Comments:	Size of this new lot is 20 spaces (double loaded), as depicted on the Illustrative Site Plan	Size of this new lot would accommodate 18-24 spaces (single loaded); accessible spaces could be provided on existing parking area adjacent to the Carriage House	Size of this new lot would be 20-24 spaces (double loaded); additional spaces would be provided on existing parking area adjacent to the Carriage House;
		Note: “Alternate” Option B and Option C would both accommodate emergency vehicle access by installing structural soils south of the Brick Barn to provide a discreet area onto which vehicles can back in, make a two-point turn, and return down the access road to exit onto Golf Course Drive; this eliminates the need for a full loop access road with large turning radii.	
Visual Impacts:	Higher (from Pavilion)	Moderate (Lower from Pavilion, Higher from Golf Course Drive)	Moderate (Lower from Golf Course Drive, Higher from Pavilion)
Physical Impacts:	Higher	Lower	Moderately High
Overall Comparison:	Worse: Impacts to historic resources are significant and are not congruent with Comp Plan goals	Better, but Imperfect: This option is the preference of staff for purposes of preserving overall integrity of sensitive historic resources	Better, but Imperfect: Staff have concluded that this partially mitigates, but does not fully resolve, historic preservation issues

UPDATED STAFF ANALYSIS – SUMMARY:

After review of this request, staff have identified factors of this proposal which are favorable and unfavorable:

Factors favorable to this request include:

1. The expanded use of the existing golf course would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan designation (“Institutional”) as articulated in the Southern and Western Urban Neighborhoods Master Plan.
2. The project design includes the stabilization, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and/or preservation of historic structures.
3. The facility is not expected to adversely impact the views from the Entrance Corridor (Route 250 / Ivy Road) in ways that cannot be mitigated through appropriate landscaping or other screening.
4. As with the previously approved special use permit amendment, the facility is not anticipated to generate additional traffic.

Factors unfavorable to this request include:

1. The proposed site layout is not congruent with the County’s Historic, Cultural, and Scenic Resources chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, staff have concluded that each of the different options for parking lot locations that the applicants have presented to the County to date would result in adverse visual and physical impacts to sensitive historic resources, and would diminish the integrity of an intact historic landscape listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Register.

As detailed above, staff acknowledge that the proposed project has elements and characteristics which are positive/favorable, as well as elements and characteristics which are negative/unfavorable. Staff analysis has prioritized the protection/preservation of the overall integrity of the historic resources, including the assemblage of historic buildings as well as the historic landscape.

Staff further acknowledge that the applicant’s planning/design process and proposal(s) are partially sensitive to historic preservation issues. However, the proposals seem to ultimately prioritize the importance of the entry / approach / arrival sequence as experienced from Golf Course Drive (which the applicants envision as the future entrance to Birdwood and Boar’s Head) in a way that results in the different parking options being sited in areas of high historic importance and high sensitivity to change.

Although staff acknowledge the substantial efforts made by the applicants to accommodate County concerns about impacts to historic resources, and although staff acknowledges that UVAF has attempted to provide optional site layouts which have some merit when evaluated using broader planning objectives, Staff cannot support any of the site layout proposals presented to date due to the physical and visual disruption of an intact historic rural landscape and the resulting diminished integrity of the site’s exceptional historic resources.

UPDATED RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Based on the findings described in this staff report update and on factors identified as unfavorable, and despite the diligent efforts of the applicant and County staff to work together on addressing and resolving historic preservation issues in a compressed time frame, **staff do not recommend approval of the requested SP amendment** – either as requested via the original Illustrative Site Plan (dated June 14, 2017), or via the different options which were prepared by the applicant and evaluated between the July 25 Work Session and the August 8 Public Hearing.

However, staff would recommend approval of the requested SP amendment if the applicant’s proposal

utilized a conceptual site plan layout that locates and configures the new parking lot in ways that are representative of the "Alternate Option B" concept sketches, with the following conditions:

1. Development and submission of a revised Illustrative Site Plan which incorporates the following major elements:
 - a. Building location, orientation, and mass
 - b. Parking lot location and configuration that is representative of "Alternate Option B" concept sketches as prepared by staff
 - c. Installation of new landscaping for screening purposes

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

2. Design and development of the parking lot area shall be subject to the following elements, as determined by the Planning Director or his designee:
 - a. Parking lot layout, site grading, and circulation patterns which preserve the existing grade around the Brick Barn to the greatest extent practicable and possible.
 - b. Approved planting plan and planting schedule which, at minimum, include:
 - i. New landscaping materials which are consistent and compatible with the existing landscape in terms of character, density, and species
 - ii. The use of native plant materials
 - c. Conservation checklist (as described in Zoning Ordinance 32.7.9.4.b.2) to ensure the successful preservation of existing trees, including the treatment of all ash trees (species *Fraxinus*) that are to be preserved for protection against the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*).
3. Ingress and egress along Birdwood Drive shall be restricted, to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator, to only those residences served by Birdwood Drive and shall not be used as an access to the indoor golf practice facility.
4. Any new construction at the existing golf course facility and site other than the site improvements shown on the Illustrative Site Plan, except for minor changes (such as additional practice tees, modifications of greens and other changes that do not require a site plan), shall require an amended special use permit.
5. The owner shall continue to implement an Integrated Pest Management/Nutrient Management Plan to reduce adverse water quality impacts.
6. Prior to any issuance of any grading permit (WPO plan approval), a landscape plan and corresponding conservation checklist shall be approved. The approved plan shall be part of, and incorporated into, the WPO plan submittal.

Alternately, if the Planning Commission wishes to recommend approval of the SP amendment as requested/proposed using parking Option C as proposed by the applicant, staff recommends the following amended conditions:

1. Development shall be in general accord with the draft conceptual plan titled "Option C" as determined by the Director of Planning and the Zoning Administrator. To be in general accord with the Option C Plan, development and use shall reflect the following major elements as shown on the plan:
 - a. Building location, orientation, and mass
 - b. Parking lot location
 - c. Installation of new landscaping for screening purposes

Minor modifications to the plan that do not otherwise conflict with the elements listed above may

be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

2. Design and development of the parking lot area shall be subject to the following elements, as determined by the Planning Director or his designee:
 - a. Parking lot layout and grading which place the parking lot location and elevation within the "bowl" created by the existing topographic variation
 - b. Implementation of earthen berms which are compatible with existing topographic variation and which further reduce the visibility of the parking lot and parked cars
 - c. Approved planting plan and planting schedule which, at minimum, include:
 - i. New landscaping materials planted in naturalistic or informal arrangements which are consistent and compatible with the existing landscape in terms of character, density, and species
 - ii. A meadow or similar grass landscape along Golf Course Drive
 - iii. The use of native plant materials
 - d. Conservation checklist (as described in Zoning Ordinance 32.7.9.4.b.2) to ensure the successful preservation of existing trees, including the treatment of all ash trees (species *Fraxinus*) that are to be preserved for protection against the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*).
3. Ingress and egress along Birdwood Drive shall be restricted, to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator, to only those residences served by Birdwood Drive and shall not be used as an access to the indoor golf practice facility.
4. Any new construction at the existing golf course facility and site other than the site improvements shown on the Illustrative Site Plan, except for minor changes (such as additional practice tees, modifications of greens and other changes that do not require a site plan), shall require an amended special use permit.
5. The owner shall continue to implement an Integrated Pest Management/Nutrient Management Plan to reduce adverse water quality impacts.
6. Prior to any issuance of any grading permit (WPO plan approval), a landscape plan and corresponding conservation checklist shall be approved. The approved plan shall be part of, and incorporated into, the WPO plan submittal.

MOTIONS:

- A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:
I move to recommend approval of SP 201700009 UVA Indoor Golf Facility (specify which parking Option), 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 201700009 UVA Indoor Golf Facility (state reasons for denial).

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1 – DHR Comments
- A – Parking Option A exhibit
- B – Parking Option B exhibit
- C – Parking Option C exhibit
- D – Parking Option D exhibit
- E – Parking Option E exhibit
- F – Parking Option F exhibit
- G – "Alternate Option B" concept sketches