

**Albemarle County Planning Commission  
DRAFT Minutes August 20, 2019**

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, August 20, 2019, at 6:00 p.m., at the County Office Building, Lane Auditorium, Second Floor, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Members attending were Tim Keller, Chair; Julian Bivins; Daphne Spain, Vice-Chair; Karen Firehock; Pam Riley; and Bruce Dotson.

Members absent: Jennie More; and Luis Carrazana, UVA representative.

Other officials present were David Benish, Interim Director of Planning; Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission; Scott Clark; Mariah Gleason; Michaela Accardi; Rachel Falkenstein; Lea Brumfield; and Andy Herrick.

**Call to Order and Establish Quorum**

Mr. Keller called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and established a quorum.

**Public Hearing Items**

**SP201900004 – Va Institute for Autism Adult Service Center**

Mr. Keller asked for the staff report.

Ms. Mariah Gleason said this is a request to use an existing building as a headquarters and also as a site for a new Adult Service Center program. She said the headquarters and office spaces are already consistent with the by-right uses of the property; however, the proposed program requires a Special Use Permit. Ms. Gleason said the Adult Service Center will serve a private school use and offer a year-round comprehensive program, serving approximately 52 adult participants in the community with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and will be staffed by 69 employees. She said the proposal is not changing any part of the building, but there are some exterior changes being offered with the conceptual plan. Ms. Gleason said one thing to note is that it is expected to actually decrease in the vehicle trip generation offered by this change in use.

Ms. Gleason said the site is located at the current Center, which is formerly known as The Senior Center. She indicated on a map to the location, off of Seminole Trail, at the intersection of Greenbrier Drive and Hillsdale, around the U.S. Post Office. Ms. Gleason said The Center has been operating at this location since 1991, but they expect to be moving to a new location at Belvedere Boulevard. She said VIA's proposal is a new use for the site.

Ms. Gleason said the conceptual plan offered by the applicant is proposing the following on-site changes to the parking lot, curb adjustment and relocating to the parking islands: a proposed fence around the outdoor recreation areas; a new garden area, as well as a possible conversion of a portion of the parking lot into an outdoor recreation space (which is a potential future conversion and includes the removal of a shed and relocation of a dumpster and dumpster pad).

Ms. Gleason said in terms of the adjacent properties and characters, traveling along Greenbrier Drive away from Seminole Trail, the uses around the site transition from commercial service uses

to residential uses. She said the businesses adjacent to the property include Rosewood Village assisted living to the north and The Laurels of Charlottesville (a skilled nursing and rehabilitation center) to the west, both of which are separated from the subject property by the traffic intersection. Ms. Gleason said to the south of the property are office buildings, and to the east of the property lie two planned unit developments (The Branchlands retirement village, and Brookmill), noting that these residential areas are buffered from the site by a heavily vegetated stream.

Ms. Gleason said this area is zoned for commercial uses and envisioned by the Comp Plan to offer institutional uses. She said the proposed utilization of the site is found to be consistent with both of these designations, and functionally very similar to the services currently offered at the site by The Center – those being education, training, social, cultural, and recreational opportunities to adult program participants.

Ms. Gleason said that after reviewing the application, staff recommended approval for the special permit, with the following changes and conditions. She said the change offered here addresses concerns from VDOT regarding the egressing buses from the site, and auto turn analysis (as seen in the staff report) notes that the buses making right turns out of the site would cross over into the designated left turn lane on Hillsdale Drive, which was opposing traffic and was not preferable by VDOT. Ms. Gleason said the conditions offered here were those typically used for Special Use Permits associated with private schools, and addressing changes to the site plan enrollment, hours and operation.

Ms. Gleason said the fourth condition offered addresses future conversion of the parking area. She explained that since the disturbance of the area is less than 10,000 square feet, it would not require an erosion and sediment control, and that this condition was offered in lieu of that to protect the adjacent stream.

Ms. Gleason said that since the staff report was written, the applicant has worked with VDOT to address the recommended changes and has submitted a revised conceptual plan. She said that based on a site visit with VDOT, the applicant and VDOT have agreed to a solution where VIA would post a signage notifying buses that only a left turnout is permitted, which would avoid them crossing into the center line of traffic. Ms. Gleason said this would also remove the need to adjust the curb and relocate two of the parking islands and was found to be a better solution.

Ms. Gleason noted that the revised recommendations from what had been in the staff report were provided to the commission and offers the addition of a fourth condition that addresses the concerns of VDOT. She added that the first draft condition has been updated to reference the revised conceptual plan. Ms. Gleason said that VDOT has noted that should a safety concern develop due to non-compliance with the sign direction, VDOT may require further changes to the entrance in the future.

Ms. Gleason said that with these changes, staff recommended approval of the special use permit with five conditions.

Ms. Firehock noted that the presentation was going too fast.

Ms. Gleason apologized and asked if the commission wanted the red line version.

*[Many people spoke off the microphone.]*

Ms. Gleason concluded the staff presentation, and that she would be happy to answer questions.

Mr. Keller asked if Ms. Gleason could clean up the next slide she would be presenting. He asked the commissioners if there were any questions for staff before opening the public hearing. Hearing none, Mr. Keller opened the public hearing to hear from the applicant.

Ms. Lori Schweller, attorney with Williams Mullen representing VIA, introduced herself as well as Mr. Ethan Long (CEO of VIA) and Mr. Ed Gillaspie (VIA Director of Operations). She said they would be able to answer any questions the commission has about the project. Ms. Schweller said she had a presentation and would attempt to go through the redundancies quickly while taking the opportunity to tell the commission about VIA and the proposed use of the property.

Ms. Schweller indicated on a slide to the proposed location, which is the current location of The Senior Center on Hillsdale Drive and located in Places 29 Hydraulic, noting that VIA did attend the CAC meeting for Places 29 Hydraulic, which was generally supportive of the proposal. She said there was an interested community member that had attended and asked questions about the proposal. Ms. Schweller said the proposal is for an Adult Services Center and offices for VIA. She said currently, these are located in three different locations in Charlottesville, and the goal is to consolidate and put the headquarters at the proposed location. She said there would be comprehensive, daily day programming for services for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder that would include classes, activities, a mock one-bedroom apartment, and spaces for instruction in vocational and domestic skills, among others. Ms. Schweller said there would also be cultural and recreational activities at the service center, and visits out into the community to parks, shopping centers, concerts, and events.

Ms. Schweller said that VIA's headquarters would be located there and indicated on a slide to a building where the Senior Leadership Team would be located, which includes Human Resources, Finance Department, and Advancement Department. She said there would be no change to the building footprint, and some parking spaces would be removed that would not be needed. Ms. Schweller said there is a plan in the future to potentially repurpose that area for recreational space for the students.

Ms. Schweller said regarding the traffic inspection issue that current expected enrollment is 52 participants and 69 staff members. She said the parcel has more parking than it needs and is not an issue. Ms. Schweller said the issue that VDOT had was with the circulation of the buses. She said that for the first 3-5 years, there will be students attending this location (18-22 years old) who will be coming on county and city buses from surrounding schools (about 60% of those being Albemarle County buses). Ms. Schweller said they expect about 4 buses in the morning and afternoon, and VDOT wanted to ensure that circulation was not an issue with those buses. She said after about 5 years, VIA plans to have those students in a different location, so it wouldn't be much of an issue.

Ms. Schweller indicated to the plan, which is to have the buses enter and circulate counter-clockwise to let the students out in the front. She noted there was room for stacking in front of the building. Ms. Schweller said the concern VDOT had was not with the entering of the parcel, but with the exiting of the parcel, because when a full-sized school bus (which is the only type the city uses, at about 35-40' long) exits the building, it crosses over the middle line on Hillsdale Drive. She said one way to avoid this that was considered was to reconfigure the parking lot, but upon visiting the site, they found that the simple solution was to require buses to exit out left only. Ms. Schweller said this is a better, simpler solution because the original plan (which she indicated to and explained on the slide), would create a new problem with leveling a new pedestrian crosswalk

that includes electronics and signs. She said that exiting out left was the solution, and that Mr. Adam Moore from VDOT was happy with the solution and sent a letter to Ms. Gleason indicating so. Ms. Schweller added that VIA will be installing a sign on the existing stop sign and indicated on the slide to the movement that would no longer be permitted by full-sized buses.

Ms. Schweller said the property is currently zoned C1, and office uses are by-right, but the proposed educational use is subsumed within the definition of private schools, and thus they are requesting the commission's recommendation of a SUP for a private school. She said the conditions, as Ms. Gleason had explained, were acceptable to the applicant. Ms. Schweller said there would be a maximum of 65 participants, and the development would be in accord with the last conceptual plan the commission saw that was dated August 7. She said normal hours of operation would be 7:30 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday, but they would like to have occasional weekend and evening activities, noting that The Senior Center currently has more days of the week than not and they therefore do not anticipate this being any problem with the surrounding community.

Ms. Schweller concluded the presentation and offered to take any questions.

Mr. Keller suggested holding the questions until they have heard from the public.

Mr. Bivins asked if there was anyone from the public who wished to speak to the matter and heard none.

Mr. Keller invited the applicant to come forward again. He asked if the commissioners had any questions for the applicant.

Mr. Bivins noted that The Senior Center ran many bus trips out of the proposed location and for all those years, the buses didn't seem to have any problems making right turns onto Hillsdale Drive. He expressed confusion that VDOT suddenly had an issue with VIA (having fewer buses and fewer people) making right-hand turns.

Ms. Schweller said the applicant asked the same question. She said that this was because it was a by-right use with The Senior Center, and because VIA is requesting a SUP, analysis was in order.

Ms. Riley said she was happy to see the application and a great program proposed for the reuse of the building. She said that particularly for the older students, the intersection at Greenbrier is a dangerous one, because there are no signalized lights and is also a confusing intersection for drivers. Ms. Riley said VIA has obviously taken steps to fence the area, but she thought she would mention this as her mother lives in the area, and she drives through it regularly.

Ms. Schweller said that Mr. Moore had commented that people in the area have not gotten used to the new traffic configuration – not only the street configuration, but the entrances to the proposed parcel and the neighboring parcel. She said this is an area that VDOT is looking at, but there at least won't be any school buses going towards that intersection.

Mr. Keller closed the public hearing to bring the proposal back to discussion and action.

Ms. Spain echoed Ms. Riley's comments in that she was pleased to see that the building will be reused in this way, and it seems like an excellent match.

Ms. Firehock said it was always refreshing to get a clear-cut, well-presented application that she

can understand thoroughly.

Mr. Dotson said he agreed with all the positive comments and was prepared to make a motion.

Mr. Dotson moved to recommend approval of SP201900004 Va Institute of Autism Adult Service Center with the revised recommendations as presented by staff.

Ms. Riley seconded the motion, which was carried by a vote of 6:0 (with Ms. More absent).