



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

STAFF REPORT

March 11, 2015

SPECIAL USE PERMIT – 15 SOUTHGATE COURT (REDUCTION IN REQUIRED PARKING)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Applicant: Fred and Carol Showker with representatives Dave and Danielle Jahne

Tax Map: 1-B-7 & 8

Acreage: .34 +/- acres

Location: 15 Southgate Court

Request: Public hearing to consider a request for a special use permit per Section 10-3-91 (8) to allow a reduction in the required parking within the B-2, General Business District.

LAND USE, ZONING, AND SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The Comprehensive Plan designates this area as Commercial. This designation states that these areas include uses for retail, office, wholesale, or service functions. These areas are generally found along the City's major travel corridors and in the Central Business District of the City.

The following land uses are located on and adjacent to the property:

Site: Office building, zoned B-2

North: Across Southgate Court, car dealership, zoned B-2

East: Office building, zoned B-2

South: Commercial uses, zoned B-2

West: Photography studio, zoned B-2

EVALUATION

The applicants are requesting a special use permit (SUP) per section 10-3-91 (8) to allow fewer than the required number of parking spaces. A requirement of the SUP obligates the property owner to provide open space equal to the area that would have been used for the required number of parking spaces in the event that more parking spaces are needed in the future. If approved, the applicant must record this requirement of the permit as part of the deed to the property.

The subject property was annexed into the City in 1983 as a single-family home and given a B-2, General Business District zoning classification. In 1985, a building permit was approved converting the single-family dwelling to a business; however, the only parking provided was the one space within the driveway.

If approved, Bridgewater Montessori School desires to relocate their facility to the 14,810 square foot parcel located at 15 Southgate Court. The facility currently operates from the Bridgewater Brethren Church and has an enrollment of ten students. The applicants state that moving the school to the Southgate Court location would provide a more convenient location for their students and would allow the program to increase their enrollment total to 25 or 30. Enrolled children would range in age between 2½ years to kindergarten age – all being served by a total of three employees.

Pre-school services offered to children ages 2½ to 4 years are generally considered child day care centers rather than a school; thus, required off-street parking is calculated at one parking space for every 200 square feet of gross floor area, which is the same as for a retail business and similar mercantile establishments. A total of eleven parking spaces would be required for the 2,200 square foot building.

As shown on the submitted layouts, they are requesting a reduction in the required eleven spaces to a total of five. They have provided two scenarios of parking arrangements for the property; each reflecting a total of five parking spaces. One illustration includes an off-street drop-off area for children, while the second illustrates a sidewalk leading to the public street. Also, as required, a site plan showing the total eleven spaces and how they could fit on the property is provided.

The applicants state that students arrive at the facility via parent drop off and a staff member meets them at “curb side”. Drop-off is scheduled between 7:30 am and 8:30 am with three different pick-up times: 1:00 pm, 3:30 pm, and 5:30 pm. Potential traffic congestion is reduced due to the varied drop-off/pick-up times, and the applicants note there are several sibling groups and carpool arrangements, which may help to reduce vehicular traffic.

Additionally, in addition to the five on-site spaces, the applicants have stated they have an agreement with Steven Toyota, a business located directly across Southgate Court, to utilize five of the car dealership’s parking spaces. At this time, the applicants state their three employees would utilize three of the five spaces. Staff is not comfortable with such an arrangement and would rather they try to utilize the flexibility offered by Section 10-3-26, which allows shared parking agreements or reductions in required parking for two or more uses based upon hours of operation. Staff understands, however, the applicants have been unsuccessful in trying to utilize the accommodations offered by this section.

As noted above, the parking requirement is calculated the same as a retail business; because there is not a separate parking regulation within the Zoning Ordinance for child day care facilities. The applicants have researched and provided information on pre-school and day care facilities from neighboring towns and cities and believe their proposal of five on-site parking spaces is adequate given other localities’ regulations.

Generally at such facilities, parents park and come in to the school—whether it is to drop-off or pick-up children, to volunteer for the day or to attend a school program—and therefore, staff believes the proposed reduction is inadequate.

Staff has had conversations in the past regarding parking for child day care centers and whether the retail calculation is too strict. The concept of perhaps changing the requirement to a percentage of the allowed occupancy of the building, plus one space per employee, rather than the square footage of the overall building has been considered. However, in most cases, staff

finds that with such a scenario the required parking still falls within one or two spaces of what a retail parking calculation requires.

As noted, staff is uncomfortable with the arrangement with Steven Toyota and believes that five on-site parking spaces are insufficient to cover the needs of the child day care facility. Staff appreciates the work the applicants have put into the application; however, we recommend denial of the special use permit request.

If desired for approval however, staff recommends the following condition:

- The SUP shall be applicable only for child day care centers, which operate substantially the same as the proposed use.