



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Department of Planning & Community Development
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To: Kurt Hodgen, City Manager
From: Planning Commission and
Department of Planning and Community Development
Date: July 1, 2016 Regular Meeting
Re: Special Use Permit – 215 & 311 Pleasant Valley Road, Pleasant Valley Elementary School

Summary:

Public hearing to consider a request from Rockingham County School Board, with representative John Hash of Timmons Group for a special use permit per Section 10-3-97 (9) to allow an educational use within the M-1, General Industrial District. The 16.8 +/- acre parcel is addressed as 215 and 311 Pleasant Valley Road and is identified as tax map parcel 102-B-1. Planning Commission must also review the school's proposed off-street parking plan per the requirements of Section 10-3-25 (12).

Background:

The Comprehensive Plan designates this area as Public/Semi-Public. This designation states that these lands are designated for public and semi-public use. They include lands owned or leased by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the federal government, the City of Harrisonburg, and other governmental organizations. Examples of uses included in this category are public schools, libraries, City Hall and City administrative and support facilities.

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

Site: Non-conforming elementary school and related facilities, zoned M-1
North: Across Pleasant Valley Road, Tenneco Manufacturer, zoned M-1
East: Massanutten Vocational School, zoned M-1
South: General Electric Auto-Auction, zoned M-1
West: Across Early Road, Interstate 81 and exit 243 interchange.

Key Issues:

The applicant is requesting a special use permit (SUP) per Section 10-3-97 (9) of the Zoning Ordinance to allow an educational use within the M-1, General Industrial District. The property is located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and Early Road. If approved, an existing school would become compliant with zoning regulations, an additional learning facility could be constructed on the site, and it would allow for expansion of both uses as necessary in the future. This review will also bring the existing use and allow the proposed use to be considered in compliance with off-street parking requirements. The 16 +/- acre site has been the home of Rockingham County's Pleasant Valley Elementary School since it opened in 1967. In 1983 the property was annexed into the City and given the M-1 zoning classification, where educational uses are not permitted by right, and thus the use has been non-conforming since it has been within the limits of the City.

Rockingham County desires to relocate the existing Dayton Learning Center/Alternative Learning Center to this site. The Dayton Learning Center is part of the Rockingham County School System and functions substantially the same as a public school. Their mission is to enable students from the four high schools and four middle schools in Rockingham County to achieve academic success, gain valuable self esteem, and receive a diploma from their home high school. Upon meeting with city staff to discuss the possible relocation of the Learning Center to the Pleasant Valley Road site, staff informed the applicant that the M-1 zoning classification does not allow schools by-right and a SUP would be required.

As noted earlier, Pleasant Valley Elementary School has operated from this location since 1967 without any concerns. The campus is primarily used as a school with operating hours between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. There are various school related functions, such as school plays, parent teacher conferences and open playground facilities that often occur after hours. The school has a capacity of 50 employees and 376 students.

The proposed Learning Center would operate between 8:45 a.m. and 2:45 p.m., with occasional after school or weekend activities associated with the school use. The existing Dayton Learning Center is used for a variety of after hour uses (such as line dancing and square dancing) and at this time it is unknown if any of these uses will continue at the Alternative Learning Center. However, the applicants consider these uses to be associated with the Learning Center; therefore, they are part of this request. The new center will have a capacity of 15-20 employees and up to 150 students.

If the SUP is approved, the Alternative Learning Center would be required to go through a comprehensive site plan review prior to construction to ensure compliance with all development regulations. This would include all necessary street improvements that would be required along the frontage of Pleasant Valley Road and possible dedication of right-of-way. The extent of this work would be determined during the comprehensive site plan review process.

Staff has also informed the applicant that the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Transportation Plan's Vision List proposes a new road to be constructed through this property to improve connectivity in that area as part of the Exit 243 interchange improvements. The schedule for the proposed road is uncertain.

Lastly, per Section 10-3-25 (12) of the Zoning Ordinance, Planning Commission must review and approve the proposed off-street parking plans for the uses. As previously stated, Pleasant Valley Elementary School would have up to 50 employees and 376 students. Currently, there are 76 parking spaces provided for the school. Included within this report is the site layout for the existing school and parking lot. This existing parking arrangement has worked for the school for more than 30 years within the City, and staff has no concerns that the parking layout is insufficient.

The applicants are proposing a minimum of 57 parking spaces for the Alternative Learning Center; however, the attached site plan shows that more can be placed on site. There is also a separate bus loop shown, as most of the students would arrive to the center by bus; only about 10 percent would drive to the school. The projection of 57 parking spaces is based somewhat upon the Rockingham County Code of one space per employee, one space per high school student, and one visitor space per 20 spaces. Therefore, given the projected capacity of 20 employees and 150 students, of which 10 percent drive, they would only need 20 spaces for the maximum number of employees, 15 spaces for students, and two for visitors – a total of 37 spaces. Staff believes the projected number of 57 parking spaces is adequate for the Alternative Learning Center use.

Planning Commission's review and acceptance of the parking would bring both facilities into compliance with off-street parking requirements; however, staff has informed the applicants that any future expansion to the facilities, which would be permitted without applying for another SUP, could necessitate a re-approval of the parking plan by Planning Commission.

Although located within an industrial area, the property has functioned well as an educational use for almost 50 years. As listed above, Massanutten Vocational School is directly adjacent to the subject property and when combined, these two parcels make up more than 30 acres of land in this area being used for educational purposes. At this time the adjacent industrial uses are not of such intensity to be a detriment to the operation of the site as a school facility and staff has no concern with allowing educational uses at this site.

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

Rather than approving the special use permit request as applied for, the application could be denied and Pleasant Valley Elementary School would continue to operate as a non-conforming use. Rockingham County would also have to find a new location for the Alternative Learning Center.

Community Engagement:

As required, the request was published in the local newspaper twice advertising for Planning Commission's public hearing for the special use permit request. The advertisement was published as shown below:

Public hearing to consider a request from Rockingham County School Board, with representative John Hash of Timmons Group for a special use permit per Section 10-3-97 (9) to allow an educational use within the M-1, General Industrial District. The permit is to allow an additional educational use to be built on the subject site as well as to bring the existing non-conforming elementary school use into conformance with the Zoning Ordinance. The 16.8 +/- acre parcel is addressed as 215 and 311 Pleasant Valley Road and is identified as tax map parcel 102-B-1. Planning Commission must also review the school's proposed off-street parking plan per the requirements of Section 10-3-25 (12).

In addition, adjoining property owners were notified of the public hearing, the property was posted with signage advertising the request, and a notice was provided on the City's website at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-hearings>.

Recommendation:

Staff supports a favorable recommendation to City Council for the requested SUP to allow an educational use within the M-1, General Industrial District. Staff also supports the provided parking layouts for the facilities.

Attachments:

1. Extract (4)
2. Site maps (2)
3. Application and applicant letter (3)
4. Proposed site development layout (2)

Review:

Planning Commission recommended approval (7-0) of the SUP as presented by staff.