

July 13, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief, Area 2 Planning Division *GK*
Khalid Afzal, Planning Supervisor, East County Team, Area 2 Planning Division *KA*

FROM: Renée M. Kamen, AICP, Senior Planner, (301/495.4723)
East County Team, Area 2 Planning Division *RMK*

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. 2011209-MCPS-1, Viers Mill Elementary School Addition, 11711 Joseph Mill Road, Silver Spring, R-60 Zone, 1989 Master Plan for the Communities of Kensington-Wheaton

RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVAL** to transmit the following comments to the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS):

1. Provide additional screening along the visible parts of retaining walls. Screening can be provided using a green trellis system.
2. Provide additional signage and pavement markings to restrict conflicting eastbound traffic flow on Joseph Mill Road into the school site when buses are dropping-off/picking-up children.
3. Provide an adequate number of inverted U-bike racks by the main entrance to serve the anticipated staff and student demand.
4. MCPS must comply with the approval conditions listed in the regulatory memo for the review of the related Forest Conservation Plan.

This staff report reviews and makes recommendations for the Viers Mill Elementary School addition only. The Planning Board must make a separate recommendation and action related to the accompanied forest conservation plan, which is included under a separate cover.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) proposes to construct an addition to the existing Viers Mill Elementary School, located at 11711 Joseph Mill Road, Silver Spring (see Attachment 1). The project will consist of an addition and reconfiguration of the site to provide a more effective vehicular circulation, separate drop-off/pick-up areas, as well as replace fifteen (15) existing portable classrooms.

The proposed addition will contain approximately 30,763 square feet, not including four proposed future portable classrooms. The addition will house 14 rooms to increase the school's program capacity from 395 to 740 students from kindergarten through grade 5, and community programs such as Headstart, pre-education programs and pre-kindergarten. The proposed addition will connect to the three main corridors in the existing building, continuing the direct sight lines into the proposed addition (see Attachment 2). Additionally, the proposed development will add several play areas, a dual purpose ball field, and basketball courts.

The original school was constructed in 1950 with additions in 1951, 1953, 1957, 1966 and 1973 and was modernized in 1991. The existing school is a single-story 86,978-square-foot building located on a property of approximately 10.53 acres zoned R-60. The school is located at the end of Joseph Mill Road, between Idlewood Road and Fernhill Road. The immediately surrounding neighborhood consists of single-family detached dwelling units, which are also zoned R-60.

There are 584 students currently enrolled in kindergarten through the 5th grade, exceeding the current building's capacity of 395 students. There are currently 15 portable classrooms on-site. School hours are from 8:50 a.m. to 3:05 p.m. with before- and after-care programs. This construction will not be phased and classes will be held in the existing building with the connections to be constructed during summer.

ANALYSIS

Master Plan

Veirs Mill Elementary School is within the area covered by the 1989 *Master Plan for the Communities of Kensington-Wheaton*. The Master Plan has no specific recommendations for this particular site, but its Community Facilities Plan chapter recognizes the need for quality education in its objectives and policies (p. 136), relying on the Approved Master Plan for Educational Facilities, the annual Capital Improvements Program (CIP), and the Growth Policy as statements of direction to establish needs in the area. This addition will be consistent with Master Plan comments of "providing the operating public school facilities necessary to sustain high quality educational programs."

Neighborhood Compatibility

Walkability - This project is located within an existing neighborhood with limited pedestrian access. Joseph Mill Road and Dahill Road both contain four-foot wide sidewalks on the east and north sides, respectively. A pedestrian path leads from the western side of the school towards Idlewood Road, where a four-foot wide sidewalk exists on the east side. Another pedestrian path leads from the rear of the school, across the ball fields, to Charles Road, which has sidewalks on both sides. There are no sidewalks on Fernhill Road.

Building Scale - The construction will add approximately 30,763 square feet, increasing the total square footage by 38 percent. The addition sets back substantially from the adjacent residential homes. The project proposes a significant reconfiguration of the drop-off/pick-up loop and parking area for parents, visitors and staff. Due to the topology of the site, the project has several retaining walls; the most prominent is located on the perimeter of the proposed parking and drop-of loop ranging in height between ± 3 -feet

and ±20-feet, topped by a 4-foot, vinyl-coated chain-linked fence. Although the majority of this retaining wall will be screened by an existing tree line, a portion of the wall located adjacent to the bio-retention area will be exposed. Staff recommends a green wall trellis system or another green system for screening this portion of the retaining wall. The additional landscaping will soften the bulk of the wall, since other plantings, such as evergreens would likely encroach into the bio-retention areas (see Attachment 3).

Transportation - The on-site traffic circulation is designed to provide safe and adequate access to the school by both cars and bus drop-offs/pick-ups. The proposal adds approximately 54 new parking spaces, doubling the capacity of on-site parking. The proposed configuration should maximize on-site stacking and parking; therefore, minimizing the overflow onto nearby streets.

Zoning Analysis

The site is zoned R-60. The following chart depicts the requirements of this zone. As submitted and shown on this chart, the proposed parking facility does not meet the setback requirements. However, staff notes that the setback provided is significantly improved over the existing gravel lot and non-compliance of this regulation is not significant to warrant denial. Staff requested MCPS to provide additional screening along the southern rim of the driveway and parking area to screen the proposed parking facility (see Attachment 4). Staff suggests creating a larger front setback of the parking area to meet this standard if there is an opportunity during construction. However, if that is not possible, MCPS should consider additional screening, minimum six-feet high, beyond the standard perimeter landscape buffer.

Zoning Section	Development Standard	Required	Proposed
59-C-1.322 (a)	Minimum Lot Area	6,000 sf (0.2066 acres)	458,686 sf (10.5 acres)
59-C-1.322 (b)	Minimum Lot Width		
	Lot Width	60 ft	±724 ft
	Width at front building line	25 ft	±260
59-C-1.323	(a) Minimum Setback from street	25 ft	±114 ft
	(b) Minimum Setback from Adj. Lot		
	(1) Side Yard		
	- Side (One Side)	8 ft	±199 ft (NW) ±215 ft (SE)
	- Side (Sum of Two)	18 ft	±414 ft (NE & SW)
	(2) Rear	20 ft	±87 ft (NW)
59-C-1.327	Maximum Building Height	35 ft	14 ft
59-C-1.328	Maximum % of lot area coverage	35%	26.3%
	Parking Facility Setbacks		
59-E-2.81	Front	25 ft	15 ft (S)
	Side (One Side)	20 ft	55 ft (E)
	Rear	20 ft	335 ft (N)

Environmental Analysis

Site Description - The 10.53-acre site sits on a ridge, sloping down to the north, east, and west and is within the Lower Rock Creek watershed – a Use I watershed. There are 2.62 acres of forest in two separate stands of 0.74 acres and 1.88 acres. Both stands are upland hardwood forests, dominated by black oaks, and are a high priority for retention due to the presence of specimen trees and steep slopes. There are no streams, wetlands, or environmental buffers on the property.

Environmental Guidelines - A Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD), #420110410, was approved by staff on November 24, 2010.

Forest Conservation - This property is subject to Chapter 22A, Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law, and a Forest Conservation Plan has been submitted for approval. Recommendation of the forest conservation is under separate cover and has been submitted to the Planning Board for consideration.

Sustainability - Montgomery County has a number of goals that work towards creating a sustainable community. These goals include reducing the carbon footprint of proposed development, promoting walkability, reducing urban heat island effect, and protecting air and water quality. Public projects should lead the way in promoting sustainability by becoming examples of the multiple benefits of sustainable development to future generations.

Since this project is an addition only, MCPS has limited options for influencing sustainability. Some of the sustainable design features include:

- A vegetated roof, which serves as a stormwater management device, reduces heat island effect, and reduces heating and cooling energy usage.
- Five separate retaining walls to minimize forest clearing and land disturbance.
- Stormwater management quantity and quality controls on-site.

Stormwater Management - The proposed stormwater management concept plan was deemed acceptable by the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) on January 18, 2011. The concept includes a green roof on the addition, microbioretention areas, and an infiltration trench.

Transportation Analysis

Area 2 Transportation Planning staff reviewed the proposed plan for compliance with the requirements of the LATR/PAMR Guidelines and recommends approval with conditions. Relevant comments from their report are summarized below.

The existing vehicular circulation will be improved by providing a larger, on-site parent drop-off/pick-up loop, which is accessible from Dahill Road and is separated from the bus access loop. Currently, the site has one small loop, which does not adequately meet the demands. The proposed parent loop should hold up to 30 vehicles, accommodating those parents currently dropping-off/picking-up at the alternative location on Idlewood Road at its intersection with Dahill Road. This reconfiguration of the driveway also allows for a longer bus lane that can store up to six buses. However, staff notes a potential conflict with the bus lane from eastbound traffic turning right from Joseph Mill

Road, and into the school site during bus drop-off/pick-ups times. Staff recommends MCPS provide additional signage and pavement markings restricting this movement during these times to reduce the conflict of traffic flows.

Parks Department

No part of the project will be located on or adjacent to Park property. Parks Department staff had no comments on the application.

Community Notification

The MCPS organized a Facility Advisory Committee to provide input on the proposed plans that included MCPS and school staff, the architectural design team, parents, representatives of local civic associations, and staff from the County Department of Transportation (DOT) and the State Department of Education. MCPS notified adjacent homeowners and additional neighborhoods by mail and by signage at the school site about the proposed committee meetings. The committee held five preliminary design meetings at the school over the course of the past year on the following dates:

- September 16, 2010
- September 30, 2010
- October 21, 2010
- November 3, 2010
- November 17, 2010

MCPS modified the plans in accordance with the suggestions and recommendations of the committee. The local PTA also reviewed the proposal.

After receiving the Mandatory Referral and Forest Conservation Plan applications, Planning Department staff notified via mail local citizen associations, adjoining and nearby property owners and other interested parties of the submittal and invited comments. As of this writing, staff did not receive any comments or requests for information during its review of the proposal.

CONCLUSION

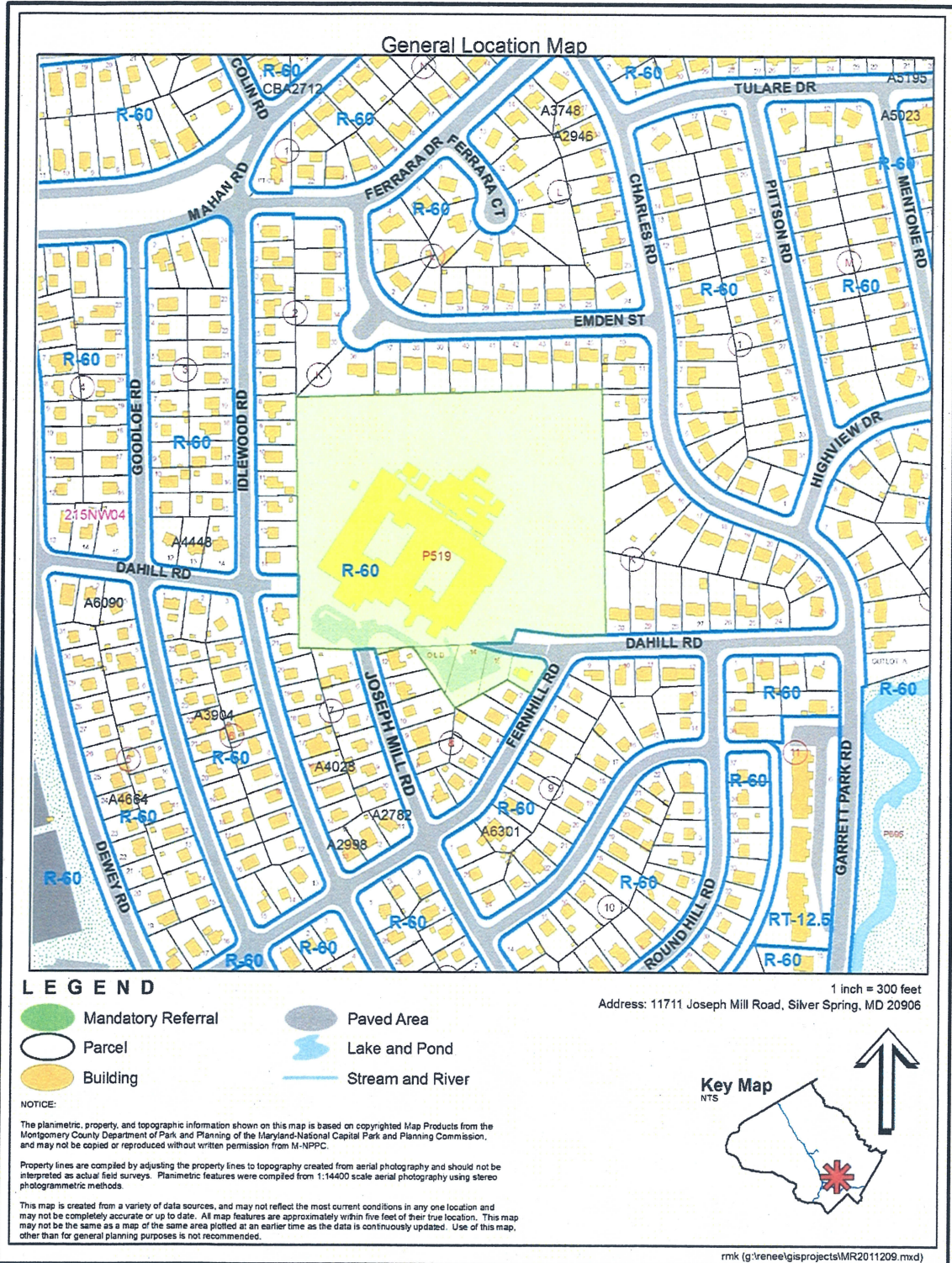
Based on information provided by the applicant and the analysis contained in this report, staff concludes that the proposed Mandatory Referral meets the applicable standards and guidelines for the environment and the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance. Although the proposal does not fully meet the R-60 Zone's standards for minimum parking facility front setback, the deficit is not significant enough to warrant denial. Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral with comments listed at the front of this report.

RK:ha: N:_AREA 2 Division\Kamen\MR2011209 (Veirs Mill)\2011209-MCPC-1-Staff Report FINAL DRAFT.docx

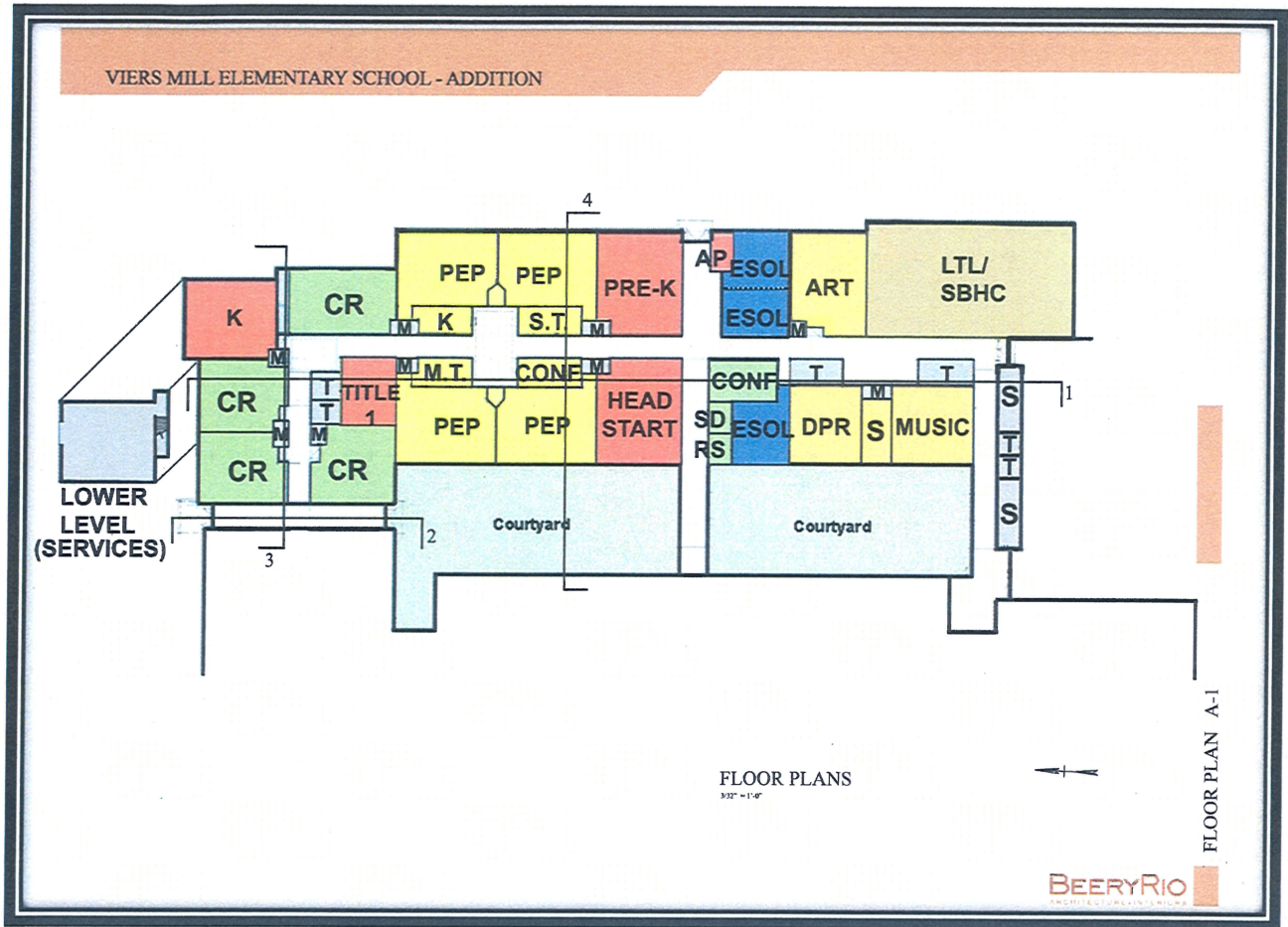
Attachments:

1. General Location Map
2. Proposed Floor Plans
3. Proposed Building Elevations
4. Proposed Site/Landscape Plan

ATTACHMENT 1 General Location Map (Not to Scale)

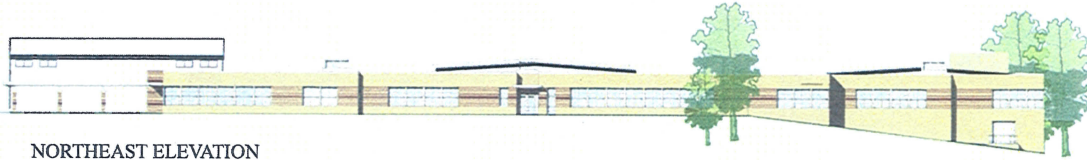


ATTACHMENT 2 Proposed Floor Plans

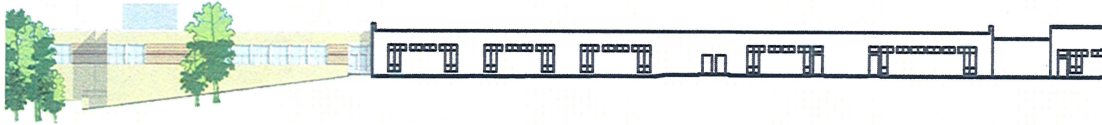


ATTACHMENT 3 Proposed Building Elevations

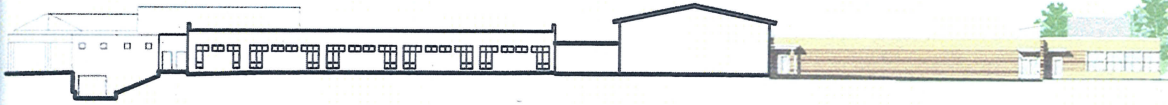
VIERS MILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - ADDITION



NORTHEAST ELEVATION
3/2" = 1'-0"



NORTHWEST ELEVATION
3/2" = 1'-0"



SOUTHEAST ELEVATION
3/2" = 1'-0"

ELEVATIONS A-3

BEERYRIO
ARCHITECTURAL FIRM

ATTACHMENT 4
Proposed Site/Landscape Plan

