



William H. Farquhar Middle School Modernization

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Description

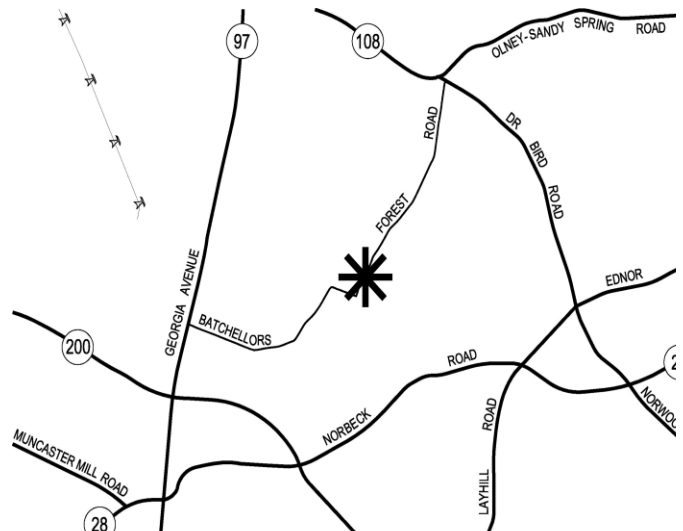
William H. Farquhar Middle School Modernization

***A. William H. Farquhar Middle School Modernization and Batchellors Forest Residential: Site Plan Amendment No. 82008019C**

Request to amend the Site Plan and Final Forest Conservation Plan to include construction of the William H. Farquhar Middle School on a parcel previously dedicated to the M-NCPPC as part of the Batchellors Forest Residential, located on the north and south side of Batchellors Forest Road, approximately 3,000 feet south of the intersection with Doctor Bird Road, 93.64 acres, RNC Zone, Olney Master Plan
Staff Recommendation: Approval with conditions

B. William H. Farquhar Middle School Modernization: Mandatory Referral No. 2014050

Located on the south side of Batchellors Forest Road approximately 3,000 feet south of the intersection with Doctor Bird Road, 17 acres, RNC Zone, Olney Master Plan
Staff Recommendation: Approval and Transmit Comments to MCPS



Summary

The Planning Board will review two items:

- Montgomery County Public Schools proposal to construct a new middle school (MR2014050: William H. Farquhar Middle School Modernization);
- Site Plan amendment to amend final forest conservation plan (The school site is covered by a previously approved Site Plan (Batchellors Forest #820080190)

This memorandum addresses staff’s review and recommendations on the mandatory referral. A separate memorandum evaluates and makes recommendations for the site plan amendment.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends that Mandatory Referral 2014050 be approved with the following comments:

1. Planning staff must review, and the Planning Board must approve, the 100 percent Construction Plans or the final bid documents for construction of the new school facilities, finding them consistent with the concept plan approved as part of Mandatory Referral 2014028; planning staff must review and the Planning Board must approve, the 100 percent Construction Plans or bid documents for the Interim Park, finding them consistent with Mandatory Referral 2014050.
2. To meet the recommendations of the 2005 Olney Master Plan, the proposed entrance opposite Old Vic Boulevard should be the primary access point for the neighborhood park and the middle school; other existing access points from Batchellors Forest Road should be restricted to emergency vehicles;
3. Crosswalks serving the school should meet design standards associated with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act;
4. MCPS should adhere to the conditions set out by the Montgomery Department of Permitting Services in its June 17, 2014 letter approving the project's stormwater management concept.

BACKGROUND

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) proposes to combine the property in Olney now used for the William H. Farquhar Middle School with an adjacent parcel dedicated to the M-NCPPC for use as a local park. MCPS then proposes to build a new and upgraded Farquhar Middle School on the park property and, once the new school building is ready for occupancy, deliver the existing school property to the M-NCPPC, improved with interim park uses. A local park will ultimately be designed and improved, as contemplated in the 2005 Olney Master Plan. The two properties will thereby switch uses.

With Mandatory Referral 2014028, the Planning Board reviewed and approved a complex set of agreements that are designed to facilitate the arrangement. The Planning Board approved release of a Rural Open Space agreement on the property initially designated as parkland and now proposed for the new school; approved the abandonment of the deed of dedication for the same property and; approved changing the use of the existing school property.

MCPS decided several years ago to rehabilitate the school, which is now in its fifth decade of use. Its evaluation concluded that the most cost effective way to bring the school up to its program of requirements for a middle school and to incorporate appropriate climate and information systems infrastructure was to build a new building.

LOCATION

Farquhar Middle School is located at 16915 Batchellors Forest Road in Olney. It sits on a 20.03-acre site on the east side of the road. MCPS built the school in 1968 and its current enrollment is 577 students. It is one of two middle schools that serve the Sherwood High School cluster.

The property is located along a minor ridgeline that separates Northwest Branch subwatersheds. It is an



upland area that slopes gradually towards a tributary that runs east and then south from the property. The property is open, with woods adjacent to the stream. The property proposed for the new school is in the Rural Neighborhood Cluster Zone.

PROPOSAL

MCPS proposes to construct a new middle school on a 17.2-acre property immediately to the north of the existing school. (This memorandum will refer to the existing school (and future park) site as **Parcel A**, and the existing park (and future school) site **Parcel B**.) When the new school is complete on Parcel B, MCPS intends to demolish the old building and prepare the site for use as an interim park. MCPS will own both sites and has concluded a perpetual use agreement with the Department of Parks to enable use of Parcel A as an interim park.

Site and Building Design



The new building will be located away from Batchellors Forest Road, with playing fields nearest the road. The park and school will share a main access point, located opposite the intersection of Batchellors Forest Road and Old Vic Boulevard, which is being constructed as part of a new community called Batchellors Forest. The student drop-off and school bus loops will be located on the south side of the school building, with staff parking to the east. The school will provide 120 parking spaces and staging space for about 20 buses.

[Farquhar Middle School Concept Plan](#)

The new school will have two wings connected by a central north-south corridor. This arrangement allows classrooms and other academic spaces to have maximum use of natural light. The three-story academic wing is located on the southern end of the central corridor, east of the administration suite. Each floor will house a separate grade. Classrooms will be designed to allow teaching in either small group teaching spaces or more traditional lecture methods. They will also support advanced information technologies, including wireless access, video and voice over internet protocol.

The one and one-half story northern wing includes arts classrooms, gymnasium, locker rooms, kitchen and cafeteria. Separate access will allow the gymnasium to be used after school hours.

The program capacity for the new school will be 796 seats in 40 teaching stations. Its internal infrastructure—the gymnasium and cafeteria in particular—can accommodate 1,000 students.

Internal Infrastructure and Energy Systems

The new school will use a computer-based visitor sign-in system that can monitor all visitors to the building and will feature motion and contact sensors at all exterior doors that can be monitored by MCPS' Department of Safety and Security. The entry vestibule will be secured, requiring visitors to stop at the front desk and sign-in before entering the school.

A natural gas-fired generator will power life safety, fire alarm and other critical systems in the event of an emergency.

MCPS intends to design the school to at least a LEED silver rating. Sustainable elements of its design include maximizing open space, installing reflective and vegetated roofs, using low-flow plumbing fixtures to conserve water, recycling materials where feasible to divert construction waste from landfills and managing stormwater to reduce runoff and improve water quality. The new school will use a geothermal ground source heat pump system and enable more occupant control of lighting, heating and cooling.

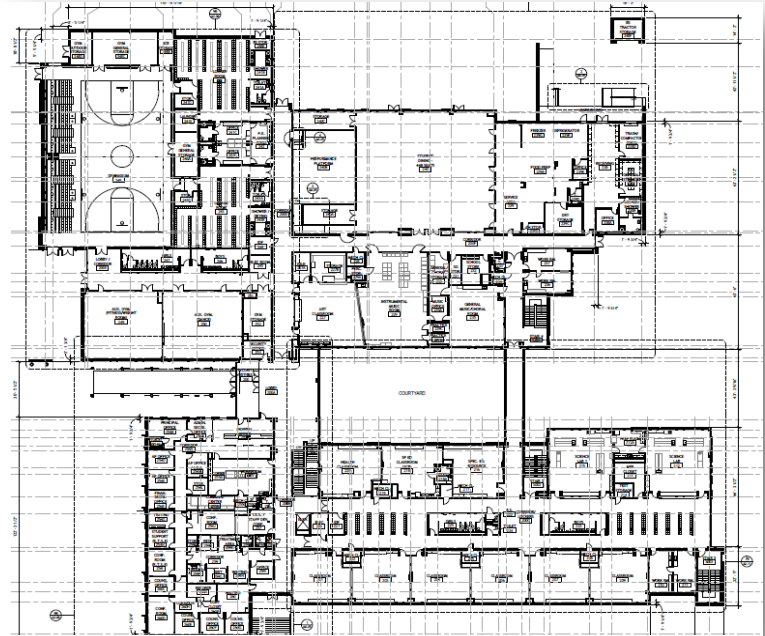
Landscape and Lighting Plans

MCPS will concentrate its new landscaping in two areas: the stormwater management systems and along the new school's property boundaries. The microbioretention areas and bioswales are proposed to be planted in a variety of trees, shrubs, grasses, and plants. Along the northern and eastern property lines, a variety of trees will be planted to create visual screens between the school and its neighbors.

MCPS plans to install lighting along its vehicular drives and parking area. Lights will be placed on 20-foot poles and use fixtures that reduce backlighting.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The Planning Board's Mandatory Referral responsibility requires review of the proposed location and development of public roads, parks and public buildings before the project begins. The Board also



Second Story Floor Plan shows academic and support wings with connecting corridor

reviews changes of use for the same public properties. Mandatory Referral 2014028 evaluated the proposed change in use, and the Planning Board recommended its approval. This review evaluates more detailed development plans for the proposed new school and the interim park.

Conformance with the Master Plan

Planning staff evaluation of MR 2014028 included analysis of the proposed arrangement for conformance with the 2005 Olney Master Plan. The Planning Board endorsed the master plan analysis, concluding that the proposal meets the Master Plan’s recommendations for recreational opportunities in Southeast Olney by creating a new local park on Batchellors Forest Road, contributing to the rural character of Batchellors Forest Road by locating the school’s playing fields nearer the road, with the school building to the rear of the property, and by providing a single main access point for the combined school and park opposite proposed Old Vic Boulevard.

Compatibility

MR 2014028 set a single condition: MCPS had to submit a subsequent mandatory referral for both Parcel A and Parcel B that conformed to a Concept Plan included in the original submission. That Concept Plan is shown above. It shows the school located some distance from Batchellors Forest Road and it placed the school’s playing fields and tennis courts along the road. It also shows the school’s bus loop and parking facilities to the side and rear of the school nearer Parcel A. In this scheme, the house nearest the new school is next to playing fields, rather than the school building. Homes across Batchellors Forest Road see the school at a distance, across the fields. Woods separate the school and its parking from several homes to the east of the property.

The proposed Middle School plan shows that MCPS has based its design on the Concept Plan; the building, playing fields are similarly situated, and the school’s circulation system remains to the south and east of the site.

The proposed project substantially meets the development standards for the Rural Neighborhood Cluster Zone, as the table below shows:

| <i>William H. Farquhar Middle School Modernization</i> | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Chapter 59 | Development Standard | RNC Zone (optional method) | Proposed school |
| 59-C-9.574(a) | Minimum area of development | 10 acres | 17.2 acres |
| 59-C-9.574(d)(i) | Minimum lot area | 4,000 sf (sfd); 3,500 sf (sfa) | 17.2 acres (749,232 sf) |
| 59-C-9.574(d)(ii) | Minimum setback from street | 15 feet | 420 feet |
| 59-C-9.574(d)(iii) | Yard requirements | 8 feet (side) 30 feet (rear) | 40 feet (side) 320 feet (rear) |
| 59-C-9.574(d)(iv) | Minimum yard width at street line | 25 feet | 750 feet |
| 59-C-9.574(d)(v) | Maximum building height | 35 feet | 42 feet |
| 59-C-9.574(d)(vi) | Maximum lot coverage (sfd) | 35 percent | 12 percent |

The Zoning Ordinance (Section 59-A-5.42) allows public buildings to reach maximum heights of 120 feet, if yard requirements are increased proportionally. The proposed building height of 42 feet is within the ordinance’s requirements, and the yard setbacks continue to meet standards when the additional height is considered.

The initial evaluation also highlighted the need for a careful evaluation of the subsequent design’s relationship to neighboring properties, identifying setbacks and landscaping as important elements. Environmental conditions—in particular, an existing stream valley buffer and conservation easement—limit the area suitable for the new school and its fields. In response, MCPS has designed a three-story school building and located it next to a portion of the adjoining subdivision that is designated as rural open space. The playing fields are located nearer Batchellors Forest Road, where they can help create open vistas recommended along this designated rustic road. The fields are therefore nearer an adjoining residential property, rather than the school building. The fields are 40 feet from the neighboring property line, which is greater than the eight feet required in an optional method Rural Neighborhood Cluster Development or the 15 feet required for a standard method development. In addition, the school property will be graded to place the fields about 10 feet lower than the elevation of the neighboring house. A retaining wall will create a gradual slope from west to east along the property line.

MCPS proposes substantial new planting between the fields and the neighboring property. Magnolia, holly and cedar trees will be planted in this area. These trees, which will be 10 feet to 12 feet tall when planted, can be as tall as 60 feet to 80 feet at maturity. The varying heights and widths of these trees should create a significant visual screen from the adjoining property. The new landscaping will combine with an existing wooded area on rural open space to the north to mask the fields and the new school building.

In addition, adjoining properties will face a one and one-half story section of the school, and, as noted, the building will be behind an existing forest stand. The northern elevation, which is nearest a residential property, shows a varied roofline and includes views of the gymnasium. The three story section is some distance to the south from the nearest neighbors.



Northern Elevation is nearest neighboring residences

Access and Circulation

Access to the School is from Batchellors Forest Road. The 2005 Olney Master Plan classifies Batchellors Forest Road as a narrow, two-lane rustic road with a minimum right-of-way of 70 feet. According to the Olney Master Plan, “...most of the public access to and from the school is via MD 108” (p. 100). Some of the traffic to the school will travel Old Vic Boulevard, which ends directly across from one of the schools driveway entrances. The alignment of Old Vic Boulevard and the school entrance was confirmed on page 100 of the Olney Master Plan.



Access and circulation

There are two access points for the school on Batchellors Forest Road, which are on park property as shown below. The southern access point has full movement for employees, buses, and allows parents to drop-off and pick-up students. To meet the master plan recommendation that access to the neighborhood park and school be coordinated, the southern access opposite Old Vic Boulevard should be the primary access point for the both facilities. The northern access point should be restricted to emergency vehicles. The full length of the student drop-off and pick-up loop provides sufficient space for stacking of vehicles.

There are no sidewalks along Batchellors Forest Road as it is a rustic road. There are also few homes directly on the road in this area; nearby residential communities are clustered away from the street. A lead in sidewalk to the park's property will be provided once Old Vic Boulevard is connected from Batchellors Forest Road to MD 108. There are sidewalk connections within the school campus connecting drive aisle and parking facilities to the building and recreational areas. A sidewalk connects parkland to the school site. However, the sidewalk crossing from the west side to the east side of the driveway to the school needs to be perpendicular to the road to comply with the American Disabilities Act (ADA), which creates a shorter road crossing for pedestrians.

Parking

Seventeen buses can be parked on the bus loop and along the south side of the building towards the staff parking while waiting for students at the end of the day. As depicted above, eleven buses can fit around the bus loop. The School will provide 124 parking spaces for visitors and full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff. The School will provide a bike rack between the basketball courts and the northern portion of the student drop-off loop.

Local Area Transportation Review

The Mandatory Referral Guidelines require preparation of a traffic study for all new elementary, middle, and high school projects unless already included as part of a private development. The traffic study was analyzed based on 1,000 students, which has generated a total of 334 morning peak hour trips and 220 evening peak hour trips. Intersections along Batchellors Forest Road and the intersections with Doctor Bird Road, the school driveway, and Old Vic Boulevard had turning movement counts done on April 1, 2014 when school was in session. These intersections will continue to function well below the critical lane volume threshold of 1,450 for the Olney Policy Area.

Environment

Review of this proposal includes evaluation of an amended Final Forest Conservation Plan and an associated Site Plan Amendment. Because the forest conservation review requires a separate action by the Planning Board, it is covered by a separate technical staff report and recommendation. The Planning Board will discuss the items simultaneously.

The new school will use a series of bioswales, micro-bioretenion facilities and other techniques to manage its stormwater. These facilities incorporate Environmental Site Design measures that are required by both the state and county. They are arranged along the drive aisles and parking areas. The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services approved the project's stormwater management concept with conditions. MCPS should adhere to these conditions as part of this project.

Parks

As conditions of approval of the Batchellors Forest Subdivision, Pulte Home Corporation dedicated approximately 17.11433 acres of land to M-NCPPC for use as parkland ("Parkland Property") and also granted a Rural Open Space ("ROS") Easement to M-NCPPC over the Parkland Property. MCPS has since acquired Pulte's underlying fee interest in the Parkland Property by eminent domain. MCPS also owns, in fee simple, approximately 20.03 acres of land immediately adjacent to the Parkland Property that is currently improved with the William H. Farquhar Middle School ("MCPS Property").

On February 20, 2014, under MD Code, Land Use, §20-301, the Planning Board conditionally approved MCPS' mandatory referral submission to combine the MCPS Property with the adjacent Parkland Property. Further, to enable MCPS to build a new and upgraded Farquhar Middle School on the Parkland Property, the Planning Board also agreed to abandon the Pulte dedication and release the ROS Easement, subject to MCPS and M-NCPPC entering into the following agreements to i) establish the terms and conditions of joint operations for the new park facility on the MCPS Property, ii) for access and maintenance of certain facilities that serve the new school, and iii) to replace the ROS Easement approved for release:

- a. Perpetual Use Easement encumbering the MCPS Property;
- b. ROS Easement encumbering the MCPS Property; and
- c. Joint Use Agreement establishing the terms and conditions of joint operations of shared facilities for the new school and park sites.

Condition 2 of Resolution MCPB No. 14-10 approving the ROS Easement release required that MCPS execute and deliver those agreements prior to the Planning Board's acceptance of this mandatory

referral submission, which establishes the detailed design and construction plans for the new school facility and the interim park. Condition 3 requires final Planning Board approval before abandonment of the park dedication and easement release can be implemented by certain documents to be recorded in the Land Records. The Planning Board has asked Staff to confirm that the 100 percent Construction Plans or the final Bid Documents provide for construction of the new school facilities and the interim park in accordance with the Planning Board's prior approvals.

The Board of Education will not have an opportunity to finally approve the agreements until July 28, 2014, after the Planning Board's last available date to consider the mandatory referral. Therefore, in order to enable MCPS to meet its construction schedule for the new school by selecting a contractor during the summer, Staff recommends that the Planning Board complete this mandatory referral review and allow MCPS to execute and deliver the agreements as a condition of the Planning Board's final approval before it authorizes recordation of the abandonment of the park dedication and release of the ROS easement; provided that the Planning Board has approved the agreements by the date of the mandatory referral hearing, and staff for MCPS recommends the Board of Education enter into the agreements as approved by the Planning Board.

As part of the overall agreements, MCPS promised to construct an interim park on Parcel A, consistent with construction drawings to be submitted with this Mandatory Referral. At the time of this staff report's preparation, Parks Department staff had not completed its review of MCPS plans for the interim park. The Parks Department will submit a memorandum with its analysis and recommendations prior to the July 24 Planning Board hearing.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

The previous section reviews compatibility issues raised by neighbors of the proposed new middle school and concludes that the design of the school building, its location on the property, the elevation of the playing fields and the provision of additional landscaping along the property line will result in a compatible relationship between the school and its neighbors. No new issues have been raised at the time of this staff report's preparation.

CONCLUSION

Montgomery County Public Schools has designed a new middle school that is similar to the concept drawing approved as part of Mandatory Referral 2014028. Site and building design, as well as the school's circulation design and location, will maintain open views from Batchellors Forest Road and limit visual intrusions on neighboring homes. Planning staff recommends approval of the proposed mandatory referral with the following comments:

1. To meet the recommendations of the 2005 Olney Master Plan, the proposed entrance opposite Old Vic Boulevard should be the primary access point for the neighborhood park and the middle school; other existing access points from Batchellors Forest Road should be restricted to emergency vehicles;
2. Crosswalks serving the school should meet design standards associated with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act;
3. MCPS should adhere to the conditions set out by the Montgomery Department of Permitting Services in its June 17, 2014 letter approving the project's stormwater management concept.