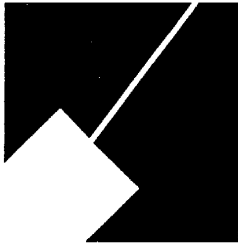


M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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April 14, 2005

MEMORANDUM - MANDATORY REFERRAL

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division

FROM: Nancy Sturgeon, ^{NS} Planner Coordinator (301-495-1308)
Community-Based Planning Division

Sue Edwards, I-270 Team Leader ^{SE}
Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. 05301-MCPS-1: Eight Classroom Addition for
Watkins Mill Elementary School Expansion – 19001 Watkins Mill Road,
Montgomery Village, T-S Zone, Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: APPROVAL to transmit the following comments to
Montgomery County Public Schools:

1. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) shall submit to the M-NCPPC Park Planning and Resource Analysis staff an athletic field restoration plan for athletic field #2.
2. Install landscaping and foundation planting in the 10-foot planting area at the main entrance; develop landscape plan for the new southeast building face.
3. Implement the Tree Save and Planting Plan, as submitted. Correct building plans to show 13 four-inch caliper trees planted as mitigation.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Watkins Mill Elementary School is located on the southeastern edge of Montgomery Village adjacent to Blohm Park and the Whetstone Run stream valley within the City of Gaithersburg (see Vicinity Map). The school was constructed in 1970 for a core capacity of 404 students on a site of approximately 10 acres. The current enrollment is 660 students and expected to increase to 665 students by September 2006. Presently, 14 "learning cottages" (portable classrooms) occupy a paved area in the rear of the school. The school staff has increased to 77 positions (full and part-time educational staff, instructional assistants, food service manager and workers, etc.) over time to accommodate the additional enrollment. The MCPS expects no additional staff will result from this modification.

The building program consists of eight additional classrooms, two additional kindergarten classrooms and related support space. Funding for a gymnasium as an add-alternate is approved. An add-alternate of six more classrooms is designed and reviewed in this application to accommodate class size reduction; this add-alternate is also approved. The MCPS intends to proceed with constructing the base-bid plus both add-alternates, pending market conditions and budgetary constraints.

These additions will increase capacity to 675 students. The project also includes: renovating the existing instructional media center; modifying existing administrative space to serve as a computer lab; and replacing two existing kindergarten classrooms with more centrally located administrative space.

BACKGROUND

Description of Site

Watkins Mill Elementary School occupies a ten-acre site bordered by Watkins Mill Road to the north and west, Whetstone Run (stream) to the south and the Windbrook multi-family community to the east. The residential units and stream valley are located within the City of Gaithersburg municipal limits.

The one-story school building constructed of brick and masonry occupies approximately 44,510 gross square feet. The slope of the property from front to rear allows for a walk-out lower level. Two access points are provided: a parent drop-off and building entrance from Watkins Mill Road on the north side of the school building and the main entrance and parking area from Watkins Mill Road on the northeast side of the building.

The school site contains two asphalt play areas, a mulched area with play equipment, a fenced playground for young children, and two baseball/softball fields. A multi-purpose rectangular playing field spans between the two softball fields.

The property is impacted by the 100-year floodplain delineation and a 25-foot wetland buffer to the rear. There are six specimen trees (greater than 30" dbh) and 16 significant trees (24-30" dbh) on the property.

Project Description

The proposed building modifications increase the number of classrooms from 16 classrooms and 8 kindergarten classrooms (see Existing Plan) to 27 classrooms and 8 kindergarten classrooms. The instructional media center will be reconfigured to include a workroom/office. The entry to the school will be improved to provide "eyes" from the main office. An elevator in the rear classroom addition will be in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (see Proposed Plan).

The classroom addition will be constructed while the building is occupied. Since the portables are currently located where the permanent classrooms will be constructed, they must be relocated during the construction period. The existing 14 portable classrooms presently on the northeast side of the building will be relocated to the west (rear) of the building. A fenced construction staging area will be created in place of the

existing portable classrooms. The palette of construction materials used in the new addition includes brick, masonry, painted steel, spandrel glass, and vision glass (see Proposed Elevations).

ANALYSIS

Master Plan

This property was in use as a school in 1985 when the Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan was adopted. At that time, Master Plan discussion centered around determination of surplus school sites because demographic projections showed a continued decline in school-age population.

Montgomery Village, including this school site, is classified under the Town Sector (T-S) Zone. The T-S Zone is a planned development zone and does not establish specific development standards.

Transportation

Major roadways in the vicinity of the school property include: (1) Watkins Mill Road, an arterial roadway (noted as A-17 in the Master Plan) with an 80-foot right-of-way and four lanes; and (2) Stedwick Road, also an arterial with an 80-foot right-of-way and four lanes. The remaining roadways are primary residential streets or private roads maintained by homeowner associations.

The existing access points to the school, roadway system and sidewalks in the vicinity of the site will provide adequate vehicular capacity and safe pedestrian accessibility to the school. Traffic volumes will not increase due to this building addition.

The proposed alignment of M-83, Mid-County Highway (a divided highway with a 150-foot right-of-way) is south of to the school site. The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation is conducting Phase I facility planning for this roadway from Middlebrook Road in Germantown to the existing terminus of Mid-County Highway at Montgomery Village Avenue. Phase I of this study is scheduled to be completed by December 2005. The M-83 alignment shown in facility planning documents does not cross Watkins Mill school property. The alignment runs roughly parallel to the stream valley located along the southern boundary of the school. Attachment 7 illustrates the M-83 alignment under study.

Parking

The existing school facility contains a bus staging area for 6 buses and 54 car parking spaces in the front of the building. Overflow parking takes place along Watkins Mill Road and Smoothstone Way. No additional parking is shown on building plans as submitted.

Landscaping and Lighting

Discussion of the Tree Save Plan on this site is contained in the Environmental section on pages 5-6 of this staff report.

Staff recommends Schoolyard Habitat gardens for the 10-foot planting bed shown on the northeast face of the building and in 10-foot or greater planting beds along the proposed additions. Where teachers and students do not require the space for learning, native plantings are suggested for their environmental, educational and aesthetic benefits. Low maintenance plantings might include small trees and shrubs, such as Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*), Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*), Sweetbay magnolia (*Magolia virginiana*), Sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*), and Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*).

The MCPS plans to install exit lighting to meet Life Safety Code and will install no additional exterior yard or parking area lights. Athletic fields are not lighted and are not intended to become lighted.

Recreation Facilities

Public use recreation space at Watkins Mill Elementary School consists of two softball fields and a non-standard play field which are part of the inventory of fields suitable for youth and adult play. These fields are heavily used by scheduled users from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. weekdays and 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturdays. The schedule lists youth football, flag football, baseball and soccer during fall 2004.

The MCPS Division of Construction plans to move the 14 portable classrooms from the outfield of softball field #1 to the outfield of softball field #2 (Attachment 8). When construction is completed, all portables will be removed from the site and two hardcourts constructed adjacent to the southwest building face.

In coordination with Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF), Watkins Mill Elementary School softball field #2 will be closed during the construction period from July 1, 2005 until September 1, 2006. Permitted users of softball field #2 will be moved to Montgomery Village Middle School (Attachment 9) whose field(s) are scheduled to re-open by September 1, 2005. Softball field #1 will remain open during construction with an approximately 225-foot outfield being maintained for CUPF use.

Beginning in summer 2006, all portable classrooms, underpinnings, walkways and other supporting elements will be removed and outfield site restoration will commence. When the last portable classrooms are removed, the softball field #2 outfield shall be restored to a condition suitable for community use and permitting by CUPF by September 1, 2006.

The MCPS shall submit a plan to the M-NCPPC Park Planning and Resource Analysis staff that indicates restoration measures. This plan shall include, but not be limited to: demolition and removal of all asphalt walkways, removal of all concrete footings and foundations, removal of all unnecessary utilities, specification for top-soiling per Montgomery County Standards and Specifications for Top-soiling, grading of the field to indicate positive drainage conforming to stormwater management required by the Department of Permitting Services (DPS), and seeding or sod consistent with existing conditions.

Environment

Forest Conservation Law Compliance – The project has an approved Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) and a Modification of Developed Property exemption (#4-0516E) from Forest Conservation Plan requirements. The NRI lists 6 specimen trees and 16 significant trees on the property.

Although the school modification project is exempt from these requirements, a Tree Save Plan (see Tree Save graphic) was required because the project affected specimen and significant trees on the property. Construction will impact two specimen trees (52-inch Black Oak and 32-inch Red Maple). As mitigation for removing the 52-inch Black Oak, 13 four-inch caliper trees will be planted.

Environmental Guidelines – The site is not located within a Special Protection Area (SPA). Wetlands (0.04 acre) and part of the stream buffer for a tributary to Whetstone Run (2.43 acres) form part of the southwestern boundary of the school property. The 100-year floodplain, as delineated in the Natural Resource Inventory, occurs outside of the stream buffer in some locations.

Environmental Guidelines of the M-NCPPC have been applied to include the floodplain and wetlands so that all environmental resources on site are protected in accordance with the Environmental Guidelines.

Water and Sewer – Public water and sewer serves existing school use.

Stormwater Management – The DPS has approved a Stormwater Management Concept Request for the site. The Concept consists of onsite water quality control via a surface sandfilter. The DPS has granted a waiver of onsite channel protection measures, on the condition that the applicant retrofits the roof leaders on the western side of the school so that they no longer drain through a piped system. The down spouts are to outlet at the ground surface allowing the sheet flow of runoff. Although recharge is not required for redevelopment projects, the applicant will nevertheless, provide this with over-excavation of the sand filter. The applicant must also submit an engineered sediment control plan for this development, to DPS. Detailed review of stormwater management computations will occur at the time of detailed plan review.

Water Quality – The project site lies within the Whetstone Run of the Middle Great Seneca Creek Watershed. Whetstone Run is a large tributary that drains portions of the Montgomery Village area that contains high-density residential areas. Many areas in the upper reaches of the watershed were built before modern stormwater runoff controls were required by the State. Uncontrolled runoff from these areas has impacted the quality of the stream channel. Regional controls have been used in some areas of newer development. The *Countywide Stream Protection Strategy* (CSPS, 1998) rates stream and habitat conditions within the watershed as 'fair' based on data available at the time. Whetstone Run is classified as a Watershed Restoration Area.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) – Planning staff encourages the MCPS to consider using locally sourced sustainable or renewable materials, recommended by the U.S. Green Building Council standards for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), where feasible, in the proposed construction/upgrade.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The MCPS convened a Facilities Advisory Committee to review various schematic design options for the project beginning from March through May 2004. Representatives from the elementary school, Parent Teacher Association and Montgomery Village Foundation were included. The final schematic design was approved by the Board of Education in October 2004.

Planning staff mailed over 440 notices to residences adjacent to the school site; no comments have been received. Letters in support of the project from school personnel are forthcoming.

CONCLUSION

The need for this school addition and modification is clear from the growing population and changing demographic profile of Montgomery Village. The MCPS and the Facility Advisory Committee contemplated a number of alternatives for placement of the building addition to minimize tree impacts. Although this project will impact two very large trees, the Tree Save Plan will protect the remaining mature trees from construction damage.

Staff recommends approval of this mandatory referral and transmittal of comments to the MCPS.

SE:ha: j:/2005 staff reports/team 3/MR 04305.watkinsmill.doc

Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Existing Site Plan
3. Proposed Site Plan
4. Existing Plan
5. Proposed Plan
6. Proposed Exterior Elevations
7. M-83 Alignment Under Study
8. Softball Fields
9. Alternate Softball Fields
10. Tree Save and Planting Plan
11. Park Planning and Resource Analysis Memo
12. Environmental Planning Memo