



## Rocking Horse Road Center, Mandatory Referral, MR2017008

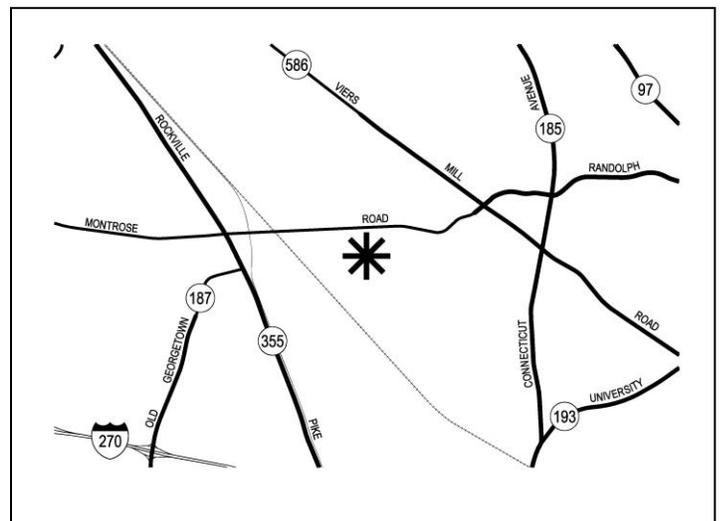
 Emily Tettelbaum, Senior Planner, Area 2 Division, [Emily.Tettelbaum@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:Emily.Tettelbaum@montgomeryplanning.org) 301-495-4569

 Khalid Afzal, Acting Chief, Area 2 Division, [Khalid.Afzal@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:Khalid.Afzal@montgomeryplanning.org) 301-495-4650

### Description

- Mandatory Referral review for the construction of an additional 116 parking spaces at the Rocking Horse Road Center;
- 4910 Macon Road, Rockville, within the 1992 *North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan* area;
- 18.70 acres, R-90 Zone;
- Applicant: Montgomery County Public Schools;
- Filing date: 12/15/16.

Completed: 1/30/2017



### Summary

- Staff recommends approval to transmit comments to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).
- The project is exempt from submitting a forest conservation plan under Section 22A-5 (t) of the Forest Conservation Law.

## RECOMMENDATION AND COMMENTS

Staff recommendation of the proposed parking addition with the following comments:

1. This approval is limited to the addition of up to 116 parking spaces and associated storm water management facilities.
2. A landscape buffer should be planted between the building and the proposed curb cut on Macon Road to screen views of the expanded parking lot from the neighborhood.
3. MCPS should reevaluate the parking needs and build only the minimum parking needed to address the excessive parking overflow on a daily basis in order to avoid a new entrance to the parking lot from Macon Road. MCPS should consider using a shuttle bus for special events and large meetings.
4. MCPS should work with the community to address their concerns about the negative impacts of the proposed parking lot expansion on the surrounding neighborhood.
5. MCPS should apply for a new Forest Conservation Exemption prior to any land disturbing activities. The new Forest Conservation Exemption should show final limits of disturbance and include P335 and P340.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Site is located in the southern corner of the intersection of Macon Road and Galena Road within the *1992 North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan* area. The areas to the north and east of the Site are predominately residential with detached houses in the R-60 or R-90 Zone. The property to the south of the Site is owned by Montgomery County and occupied by the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School pursuant to a long-term lease. Apartment buildings in the R-30 Zone are located to the west of the Site.



Figure 1: Vicinity Map (Site outlined in red)

The 18.70-acre Site comprises two parcels owned by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and classified in the R-90 Zone. The Site's western parcel (P335) contains athletic fields used by the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School and a community garden managed by the Montgomery County Parks Department. The eastern parcel (P340) is improved with the 41,037-square foot Rocking Horse Road Center, 9,822 square feet of portables, and a surface parking lot containing 102 spaces. The Rocking Horse Road Center primarily serves as an administration facility for MCPS and houses offices for the ESOL, Child Find, Title 1 Services, DHHS Health and Wellness, Resident International Students, and Pre-K Head Start Programs.



Figure 2: Aerial view (site outlined in red)

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Proposal

The proposed parking lot expansion is needed to alleviate safety issues created by staff and visitors parking off-site. While there are 160 staff and approximately 90 visitors to the facility each day, there are only 102 parking spaces on-site. In addition, special events and peak registration add approximately 160 visitors. The facility is also home to a quarterly ESOL meeting that brings an additional 400 visitors to the Site. When vehicles are parked on both sides of the street in the surrounding neighborhood, the narrow width of the roadway creates safety concerns for vehicles and pedestrians.

MCPS proposes to expand the existing parking lot by 116 parking spaces, bringing the total number of spaces to 218. The additional parking will allow staff that work at the facility to park onsite rather than offsite in the adjacent neighborhood. The expanded parking lot will also accommodate parking for approximately 58 visitors at a time.

The expanded parking lot will include a new vehicular access point from Macon Road. The new entrance is currently under review with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). The proposed drive aisle will be directly adjacent to, but will not permanently impact, the community gardens. Six-foot sidewalks will be added adjacent to the new parking areas to provide access to the building. No change in use or building improvements are proposed, but two portables will be removed. Proposed landscaping comprises the plantings in the bioretention areas and 11 shade trees.

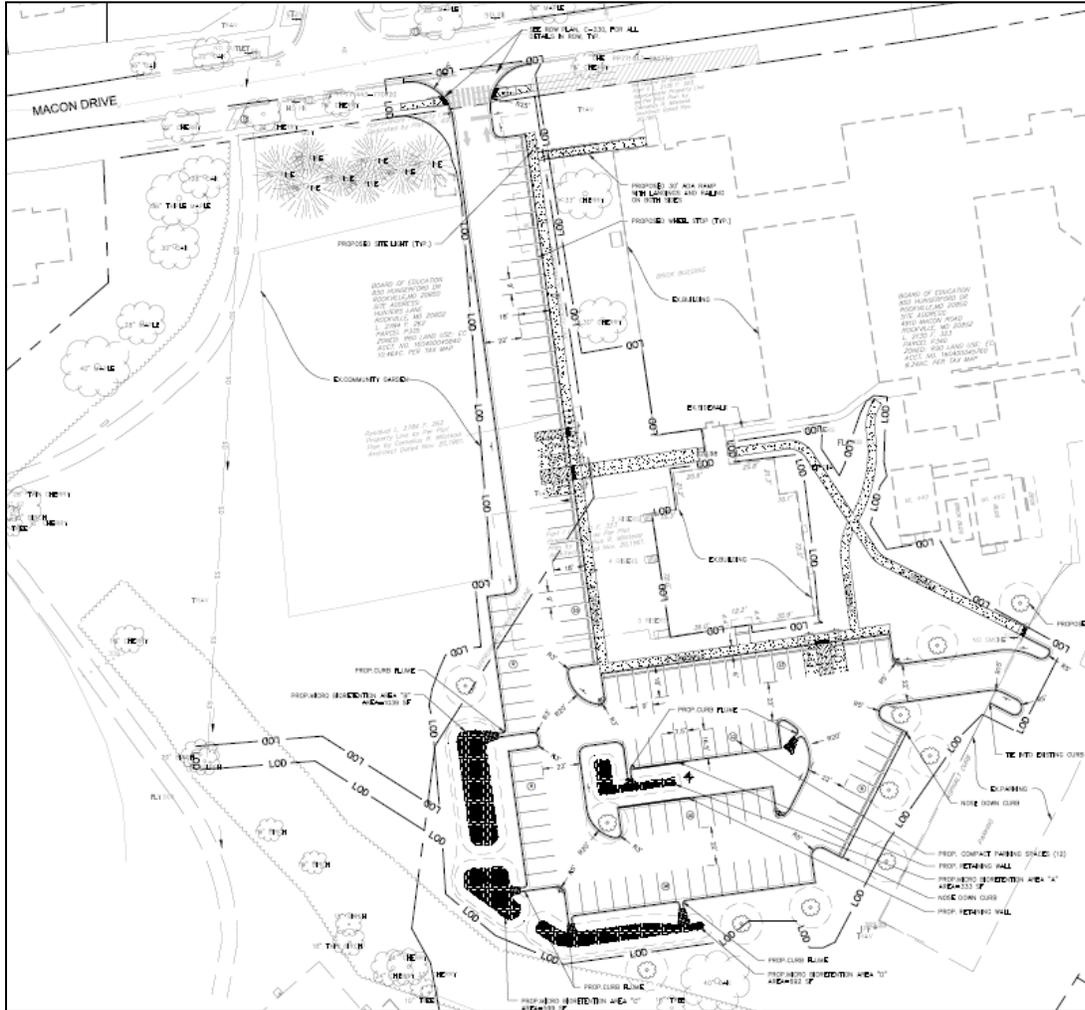


Figure 3: Site Plan

### Community Outreach

Planning Department Staff mailed out a public notice on January 3, 2017. The notice indicated that the Mandatory Referral could be handled administratively, but Staff received an email from a representative of the Randolph Civic Association (RCA) who wanted to provide feedback on the proposal, and a Planning Board hearing was subsequently scheduled.

The RCA conditionally supports the Mandatory Referral, but requests that MCPS and MCDOT prohibit street parking on the south side of Macon Road between the intersection of Hunter’s Lane and Rocking Horse Road on Monday through Friday during business hours. RCA also requests that MCPS consider

constructing a smaller parking lot without a new entrance on Macon Road, and include landscaping between the community garden and the Rocking Horse Road Center to reduce the visual impacts of the expanded parking lot. Staff also received an email from a resident expressing opposition to MCPS use of the Rocking Horse Road Center as an office that draws a large number of visitors (Attachment 3).

Given the number of MCPS employees and daily visitors to the Rocking Horse Road Center, Staff finds that the size of the proposed parking lot expansion is appropriate to address the current overflow of parking into the neighborhood, and that the proposed entrance on Macon Road is necessary to provide adequate circulation for a parking lot of this size. The new entrance will also provide improved access for fire and rescue vehicles. However, Staff has not analyzed the programming needs and operations of all the current uses on site and their total parking needs. Staff therefore recommends that MCPS explore other options to address special events parking and consider building a smaller addition to the parking lot that will not need a new entrance on Macon Road. MCPS should work with the community to address their concerns about the negative impacts of the new addition. If the size of the proposed parking lot cannot be reduced, the Applicant should plant a landscape buffer between the new driveway entrance and the lead-in sidewalk from Macon Road to screen the views of the expanded parking lot.

RCA's request to prohibit street parking is an operational issue handled by MCDOT, and the community can work directly with MCDOT to try to add the area to the Residential Parking Permit program

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Master Plan**

The *North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan* does not specifically discuss the Rocking Horse Road Center, but it emphasizes the need to maintain compatibility between public schools and surrounding neighborhoods, particularly when a school is used for something other than its typical purpose. The Plan also highlights the need to address traffic and parking controls, landscaping, and parking lot screening during the Mandatory Referral process when a school undergoes expansion or modernization (page 146).

This proposal is consistent with the approved Master Plan because it addresses the existing parking shortage at the Rocking Horse Road Center, and will help prevent parking overflow into the surrounding neighborhood. Staff recommends that MCPS add a landscape buffer northeast of the building along Macon Road to screen views of the new parking lot from the neighborhood.

The Site is also within the boundary of the pending *White Flint 2 Sector Plan*. The November 2016 Public Hearing Draft of the *White Flint 2 Sector Plan* recommends that MCPS provide a youth size rectangular athletic field on the Site (page 77). The Plan also recommends that MCPS consider locating an elementary school at the Site. The Site was used as an elementary school in the past, and converting it back to a school could relieve existing school capacity issues (pages 47, 85).

However, as MCPS has not indicated any intention to relocate the offices, the Rocking Horse Road Center will continue to generate a need for the additional parking in the foreseeable future. The proposed parking lot expansion will provide needed parking onsite for MCPS staff and visitors to relieve existing problems with parking spillover into the surrounding neighborhood.

## **Transportation**

### Available Transit Service

Transit service is available on nearby Randolph Road via the following bus routes:

1. Ride On route 10 operates with 30-minute headways between Hillandale (at New Hampshire Avenue and Powder Mill Road) and the Twinbrook Metrorail Station on weekdays and weekends.
2. Metrobus route C4 operates with 15-minute headways between the Twinbrook Metrorail Station and the Greenbelt Metrorail Station on weekdays and weekends.
3. Metrobus route C8 operates with 30-minute headways between the College Park-University of Maryland Station and the White Flint Metrorail Station on weekdays and Saturdays.

### Pedestrian Facilities

Macon Road has an existing sidewalk with a green panel.

### Adequate Public Facilities

No expansion of the building or increase in enrollment is proposed, so no adequate public facilities finding is needed.

## **Environment**

### Environmental Guidelines

There is no forest, streams, wetlands, floodplains, or environmental buffers on the site. The site lies in the Lower Rock Creek subwatershed of the Rock Creek watershed and is outside of any Special Protection Areas. The proposed project is in compliance with the *Environmental Guidelines*.

### Forest Conservation Law

The proposed project is subject to the Montgomery County Forest Conservation law (Chapter 22A of the Code) but has received an exemption from Article II from the requirements of preparing a forest conservation plan under Section 22A-5(t). Forest Conservation Plan Exemption 42016077E was granted on November 23, 2015. This exemption covers an activity that clears no more than 5000 square feet of forest, does not affect any forest in a stream buffer or located on property in a special protection area which must submit a water quality plan and does not require approval of a new subdivision plan.

Exemption #42016077E only covers P340 and does not include P335. As the proposed development includes portions of both parcels, a new exemption must be applied that includes both parcels. Also, the proposed Limits of Disturbance (LOD) have changed since exemption #42016077E was granted. The new exemption must show the final LOD and be granted prior to any land disturbing activities.

### Stormwater Management

The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Service approved a Storm Water Management Concept Plan on August 12, 2016.

## **Parks**

Although the proposed parking lot does not impact M-NCPPC owned property, the Parks Department staff recommends against the Mandatory Referral application because the additional parking would take up open space that is needed for a youth ballfield. Parks staff believes that if the proposed parking lot

expansion is built, the facility will not be able to function as an elementary school in the future, nor will the Site be able to meet the immediate need for athletic fields in the community (Attachment 4).

Planning Staff acknowledges the need for more ballfields in the area, and supports the conversion of the Center back into an elementary school at some point in the future, if needed. However, as MCPS has not indicated any intention to relocate the offices, the Rocking Horse Road Center will continue to generate a need for the additional parking in the foreseeable future. If the Site converts back into a school, a complete redesign of the property will be necessary, which will present an opportunity to reassess the space needs for all educational and recreational functions that should be accommodated onsite.

### **Zoning**

The Mandatory Referral Application does not address the parking lot landscaping requirements under Section 6.2.9.C, which requires a parking lot with 10 or more spaces to:

1. include landscaped islands, a minimum of 100 contiguous square feet each, that comprise at least 5% of the total area of the surface parking lot;
2. maintain a minimum tree canopy of 25% coverage at 20 years of growth; and
3. include a perimeter planting area.

Staff recommends that the proposed parking lot satisfy the parking lot landscaping requirements. In particular, the Applicant should provide a perimeter planting buffer along the Macon Road right-of-way to screen the views of the proposed parking lot from the neighborhood. The perimeter planting area should be a minimum of six feet wide, contain a hedge or low wall a minimum of three feet high, and have a canopy tree planted every 30 feet on center.

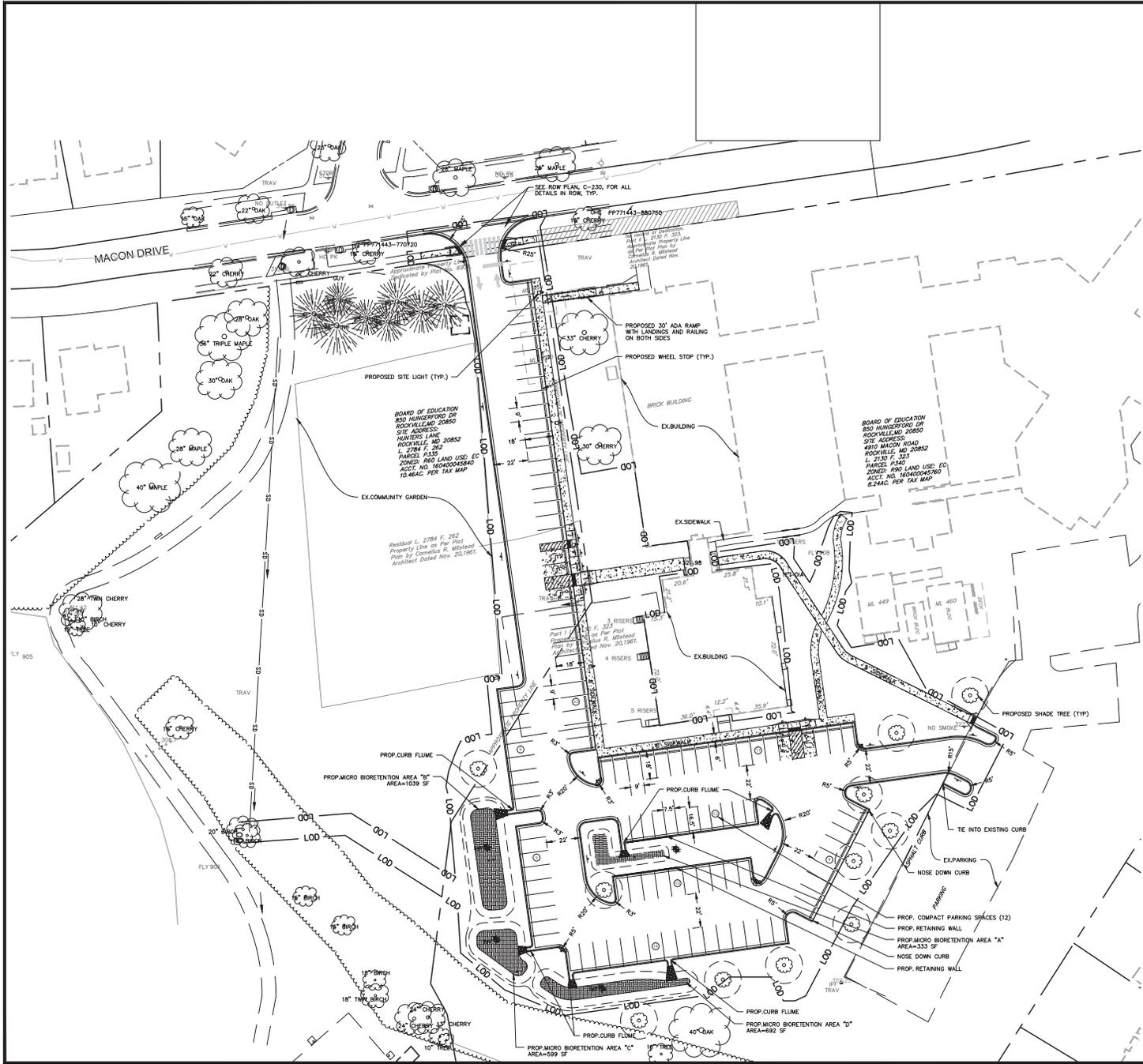
### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis contained in this report, Staff recommends approval to transmit comments listed at the front of this report to Montgomery County Public Schools.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Site Plan
2. Forest Conservation Exemption
3. Correspondence
4. Parks Department Memo

# ATTACHMENT 1



### LEGEND

- EXISTING TREE
- EXISTING PINE TREE
- EXISTING SIGN
- EXISTING LIGHT
- EXISTING CURB INLET
- EXISTING SEWER MANHOLE
- FOREST TREELINE
- PROPERTY BOUNDARY
- EXISTING BUILDING
- EXISTING UNDERGROUND TELEPHONE
- EXISTING GAS LINE
- EXISTING SANITARY SEWER
- EXISTING STORM SEWER
- EXISTING CONTOUR
- EXISTING CHAIN LINK FENCE
- EXISTING CURB
- EXISTING SPOT ELEVATION
- PROPOSED CONTOUR
- PROPOSED STORM DRAIN
- PROPOSED SANITARY SEWER LINE
- PROPOSED UNDERGROUND ELECTRIC LINE
- PROPOSED CURB AND GUTTER
- PROPOSED STORM INLET
- PROPOSED MANHOLE
- PROPOSED FLARED END SECTION
- PROPOSED SIGN
- PROPOSED LIGHT
- PROPOSED CLASS 1 RIP RAP
- PROPOSED CONCRETE
- PROPOSED BIORETENTION AREA
- PROPOSED SHADE TREE AND GROWING ZONE

### SITE TABULATION

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
BUILDING	41,037 SF	41,037 SF
PORTABLES	9,822 SF	8,208 SF
TOTAL BUILDING	50,859 SF	49,245 SF
PARKING SPACES	102	116

### Planting Schedule

Symbol	Scientific/Common Name	Qty.	Size
	<i>Quercus palustris</i> / Pin oak	11	2 1/2" - 3" Caliper

### Tree Canopy Table

Property Area (SF)	358,934
Limits of Disturbance Area (SF)	84,072
Shade Trees Required	32
Shade Trees Provided	11
Fee to be Paid (\$)	55,250
1	452
2	452
3	452
4	452
5	452
6	452
7	452
8	452
9	452
10	452
11	452

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 20410 Century Boulevard, Suite 230  
 Germantown, MD 20874  
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 www.nobiseng.com  
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PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION  
 I CERTIFY THAT THESE DOCUMENTS WERE  
 PREPARED OR APPROVED BY ME, AND THAT  
 I AM A FULLY LICENSED PROFESSIONAL  
 ENGINEER UNDER THE LAWS OF THE  
 STATE OF MARYLAND.  
 LICENSE NO. 31188  
 EXPIRATION DATE: 1/12/2017

**ROCKING HORSE  
 ROAD CENTER**  
 4910 MACON ROAD  
 ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION
REVISIONS		

DATE: AUGUST 2016  
 NOBIS PROJECT NO. 86960.39  
 DRAWN BY: DWC, ME  
 CHECKED BY: JA  
 CAD DRAWING FILE:  
 86960.39 C-200-SITE PLAN.dwg  
 SHEET TITLE

**SITE PLAN**

SHEET  
**C-200**  
 X OF X

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## ATTACHMENT 2



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

November 23, 2015

Mr. Seth P. Adams, Assistant to the Director  
Montgomery County Public Schools  
45 West Gude Drive, Suite 4300  
Rockville, MD. 20850

Re: Rocking Horse Center Addition; Forest Conservation Exemption 42016077E

Based on the review by staff of the Montgomery County Planning Department, the Forest Conservation Exemption Request submitted on November 9, 2015 for the plan identified above, is confirmed. The project site is exempt from Article II of the Montgomery County Code, Chapter 22A (Forest Conservation Law), Section 22A-5(t) because the site is a modification to an existing non-residential developed property: (1) no more than 5,000 square feet of forest is ever cleared at one time or cumulatively after an exemption is issued, (2) the modification does not result in the cutting, clearing, or grading of any forest in a stream buffer or located on property in a special protection area which must submit a water quality plan, (3) the modification does not require approval of a preliminary plan of subdivision, and (4) the modification does not increase the developed area by more than 50% and the existing development is maintained.

A pre-construction meeting is required after the limits of disturbance have been staked prior to clearing and grading. The MCPS representative, construction superintendent, forest conservation inspector, private arborist, and Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services sediment control inspector shall attend this meeting. If you have any further questions you may contact me at [david.wigglesworth@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:david.wigglesworth@montgomeryplanning.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Wigglesworth".

David Wigglesworth  
Sr. Planner  
Development Applications & Regulatory Coordination

CC: 42016077E  
Michael Norton (NLD)

## ATTACHMENT 3

January 16, 2017

Randolph Civic Association  
PO Box 2202  
North Bethesda, MD 20852

RE: MR 2017008  
Rocking Horse Road Center

Montgomery County Planning Board  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Montgomery County Planning Board,

Thank you for providing this opportunity to share input on the proposed parking lot for the Rocking Horse Road Center located at 4910 Macon Road in North Bethesda. The Randolph Civic Association would like for you to consider our feedback on the proposed plan from the point of view of our neighborhood.

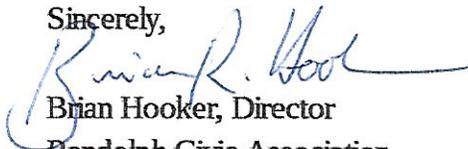
The Randolph Civic Association (RCA) represents 1,300 homes in neighborhoods that border and fall within the White Flint 2 Sector Plan boundaries. Our neighborhood has a long and proud history of civic engagement. Our neighborhood's history with the Rocking Horse Road Center includes its purpose-built use as our local elementary school, its use as our neighborhood polling place, and its hosting of a Montgomery County Community Garden. Although the current primary function of the facility is hosting several MCPS and DHHS staff and services, these services do not directly benefit the neighborhood within which it is located.

Through recent outreach by MCPS, the RCA was informed about MCPS' plans to construct a parking lot to accommodate the numerous staff and visitors to the facility in late 2016. The outreach regarding the parking lot was a welcome improvement in communication with the community which was non-existent in previous years. MCPS' own mandatory referral submission states that there are only 102 parking spaces for the approximately 160 staff and 90 daily visitors to the facility, and street parking creates "a dangerous condition for vehicles and pedestrians passing by." This office building in a neighborhood of small single-family homes has created a serious over-crowding of streets to the point that they are impassable by two-way traffic during the day.

With all of the empty office space in the County close to transit, we disapprove of Rocking Horse Road Center's current commercial use and have advocated for its use as a neighborhood park or as a future elementary school in the recent White Flint 2 planning process. Until those plans come to fruition, we are faced with the immediate and serious impact that street parking adjacent to the Rocking Horse Road Center has to our neighborhood. Currently, parking on the residential streets of Macon Road, Hunters Lane, and Galena Road is extremely difficult during business hours Monday through Friday. The excessive street parking reduces the width of the roads to the point that two-way traffic is not possible. MCPS buses often have difficulty reaching the bus stop located at the corner of Galena Road and Macon Road. It is for these reasons that the RCA **conditionally supports** MCPS' effort to provide more parking for staff and visitors to the Center. The RCA's primary condition of support is that MCPS and MCDOT **institute a prohibition on street parking** during business hours Monday through Friday. This prohibition would be on the south side of Macon Road between the intersection of Hunters Lane and Rocking Horse Road. The north side of Macon Road between Galena Road and Hunters Lane has an existing mix of full-time and business-hour street parking prohibitions. Without this prohibition of on-street parking we believe the intended effect of the parking lot will not be realized. Secondly, the RCA requests that MCPS consider a smaller parking lot that does not create the need for a second egress/curb cut near the intersection with Hunters Lane. It is the RCA's hope that a smaller parking lot utilizing the existing entrance be considered as an option. Lastly, the RCA would like some landscaping, such as trees or shrubs, to be planted along between the community garden and the Rocking Horse Road Center to reduce the visual impact on the parking lot from neighbors on Macon Road.

The RCA thanks you again for the opportunity to comment on this proposed parking lot. We believe that we can find a compromise that will meet the short-term needs of both the MCPS facility and the residential community in which it is located.

Sincerely,



Brian Hooker, Director  
Randolph Civic Association

## **Tettelbaum, Emily**

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**From:** Tettelbaum, Emily  
**Sent:** Friday, January 27, 2017 10:06 AM  
**To:** Tettelbaum, Emily  
**Subject:** FW: MR 2017008 Rocking Horse Road Center White Flint2

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**From:** Theodore Kroos [mailto:tkroos@amrcommercial.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 26, 2017 5:02 PM  
**To:** Tettelbaum, Emily <Emily.Tettelbaum@montgomeryplanning.org>  
**Cc:** Brian Hooker <brian.r.hooker@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** RE: MR 2017008 Rocking Horse Road Center White Flint2

Dear Emily & MCPS:

I wanted to start off by disclosing that I am a licensed real estate agent in MD, DC & VA, as I am a full time Commercial Real Estate agent . Therefore every day I am dealing with zoning issue's, use's permitted by right. It is my understanding the MCPS is exempt for local zoning, however large or small the use. Initially this property (Zoned R-90) was used as an elementary school, years later the county claims this property as an Institutional/Community use. No occupancy permit, no community involvement, MCPS is exempt from all the zoning rules and regulations. MCPS will just occupy with no county approval. How can the county claim a Institutional/Community use? This is not for our community, this is a county use, therefore voiding the use to the community? The initial parking lot was for about 50+/- cars, now they are talking about 800+/- visitors and parking for 230+/- vehicles. WOW. Currently the site has no storm water management, now the county wants to build 116 spaces. With just SWM for the new lot, exempting them from EPA regulations on the balance of the site. I would like to see what the total impervious areas are for the total site ( all parking, buildings, sidewalks, etc.). County Tax records shows 8.25+/- acres with about 4-5+/- acres of impervious area. Does this impervious area meet the EPA/ Local laws for storm water management? No screening? No formal zoning? Who will police the lot? Someone will get injured as a result of the overcrowding. In closing would you want this facility in your front yard or community? This is an office use not a community use. At some point there will be a catastrophic injury from the vehicles that continue to flood the streets.

Furthermore the county wants/needs an elementary school in North Bethesda? Has anyone at MCPS or Planning thought of using Rocking Horse Center as its original use as a school and not an office building? Surely someone has thought of this use? If the county decided to use as a school, then they would bring this facility back to its original condition and demoing all the improvements that they just made? Not sure if this makes any sense? Clearly this building current use does not conform to current zoning rules/regulations other than MCPS, storm water management. MCPS wants to add more people/cars and more services to this neighborhood school that just simply can't handle the volume of people/cars. This use infringes on my right to quietly use and enjoyment my property, adversely impacting property values. I would want to see a study as to the impacts of residential property values impacted by this proposed use.

The county needs to find a suitable property that is properly zoned that can accommodate an office use and parking, etc.

Thank You as Your comments are welcome.

**Ted Kroos**  
**Vice President**  
**AMR Commercial, LLC.**  
**4849 Rugby Avenue, Suite 200**  
**Bethesda, Maryland 20814**

**301-961-9696 ext. 214 (Main)**

**301-370-7425 (Cell)**

**301-656-7551 (Fax)**

[TKroos@amrcommercial.com](mailto:TKroos@amrcommercial.com)

[www.amrcommercial.com](http://www.amrcommercial.com)



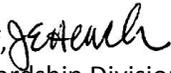
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# ATTACHMENT 4

## MEMORANDUM

January 9, 2017

**TO:** Emily Tettelbaum, Area 2, Montgomery County Planning Department

**VIA:** Dr. John E. Hench, Chief,   
Park Planning and Stewardship Division

Brooke Farquhar, Supervisor, Park and Trail Planning Section   
Park Planning and Stewardship Division (PPSD)

**FROM:** Rachel Davis Newhouse, Planner Coordinator, Park and Trail Planning   
Park Planning and Stewardship Division (PPSD)

**SUBJECT:** Rocking Horse Road Center Mandatory Referral

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## BACKGROUND

Montgomery County Public Schools has been using the Rocking Horse Center as offices for various community programs including school health services, school international admission services and school counseling services. In order to reduce complaints from neighbors about parking for these services in the neighborhood, MCPS is proposing additional parking on the site. The additional parking would take up the space needed for a youth athletic field.

## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends against the plan submitted by MCPS for additional parking on the Rocking Horse Road Center property for the following reasons:

1. The White Flint 2 Sector Plan recognizes the lack of capacity at the elementary schools in the Sector Plan area and is recommending that this property become an elementary school again. On page 85 of the White Flint 2 Public Hearing Draft, the plan states; "Consider locating an elementary school site on the Rocking Horse Road Center facility in the Randolph Hills neighborhood. The property, which is a former elementary school, has the size of a traditional elementary school and is located in a residential area and is within the Sector Plan area."
2. Page 77 of the White Flint 2 Sector Plan is recommending that a youth sized rectangular athletic field be located on the Rocking Horse Road Center property (see attached concept).

Staff met with the applicant in November 2016 to review the plans and discussed ways to phase the parking in as needed and to create a smaller parking lot in the area not needed for a field.

Staff believes that if the entire parking expansion plan is built, then this facility will not be able to function as a future elementary school with the necessary outdoor recreational amenities nor will the site be able to be used to meet the immediate athletic field needs of this community.

Rocking Horse Road Center

Proposed youth athletic field