

UNAPPROVED MINUTES  
PLANNING COMMISSION

March 14, 2012

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Salem, Virginia, was held in Council Chambers, City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, at 7:00 p.m., on March 14, 2012, there being present the following members of said Commission, to wit: Terrance D. Murphy, Jimmy W. Robertson, Bruce N. Thomasson, and Samuel R. Carter, III, (Vicki G. Daulton – absent); with Terrance D. Murphy, Chair, presiding; together with James E. Taliaferro, II, Assistant City Manager and Executive Secretary, ex officio member of said Commission; Melinda J. Payne, Director of Planning and Development; William L. Simpson, Jr., Assistant City Engineer; Benjamin W. Tripp, Planner; Judy L. Hough, Planner; and William C. Maxwell, Assistant City Attorney; and the following business was transacted:

ON MOTION MADE BY COMMISSION MEMBER THOMASSON, SECONDED BY COMMISSION MEMBER CARTER, AND DULY CARRIED, the minutes of the regular meeting and work session held on December 14, 2011, were approved as written – the roll call vote: all present - aye.

In re: Request of City of Salem School Board, property owner, for the issuance of a Special Exception Permit to allow primary/secondary educational facilities on the property located at 1600 Carolyn Road (Tax Map #212-1-1)

The Executive Secretary reported that this date and time had been set to hold a public hearing to consider the request of City of Salem School Board, property owner, for the issuance of a Special Exception Permit to allow primary/secondary educational facilities on the property located at 1600 Carolyn Road (Tax Map #212-1-1); and

WHEREAS, the Executive Secretary further reported that notice of such hearing had been published in the February 29 and March 7, 2012, issues of The Roanoke Times, and adjoining property owners were notified by letter mailed March 2, 2012; and

WHEREAS, staff noted the following: the subject property consists of one parcel currently zoned RSF, located at the end of Carolyn Road (off Mill Lane); the property is

approximately 10.25 acres and has been used for an elementary school (South Salem School) since the late 1960s; the existing facility predates the current zoning ordinance requirement that educational facilities obtain a Special Exception Permit when locating in RSF; as such, it exists as a grandfathered use; and this request will make the new building in compliance with the ordinance; and

WHEREAS, Jay Taliaferro, Assistant City Manager and Executive Secretary, appeared before the Commission representing the City of Salem School Board in support of the Special Exception Permit request; he noted that the school division had invited him to serve on its planning and design team for South Salem School and Salem High School, and he was present as a representative of that team; he also noted that Margaret Humphrey, Principal of South Salem School, was present at the meeting; he noted that the property in question is zoned Residential Single Family, and the use is for secondary and primary education, but no Special Exception Permit has been granted; so, the existing building is legal nonconforming, and the proposed project is to tear down the existing building and replace it with a new school, which would no longer be grandfathered; he explained that the project is a 10-acre site off Carolyn Road in south Salem; he pointed out the footprint of the existing school on a illustration of the proposed project; the school was built in 1964, and the round area was actually designed as a bomb shelter; this was during the cold war era, and this was the reasoning behind that; the current facility is about 55,000 square feet, and he noted that there are several problems with the building; first, the media center is undersized; second, there is hallway in the cafeteria that separates the dining area and the kitchen; so, students have to stand in the hallway in order to go through the kitchen to get their food, which blocks the hallway; additionally, because of the size of the building, there are too few and many small instructional spaces for teaching the children; when the design team looked at what was needed for a elementary school, the programming called for approximately 90,000 square feet; the proposed project will be a new building with approximately 88,000 square feet; he detailed the area on the illustration on display; one of the key features in the new building is security; he showed on the drawing that in order for anyone to get into the school, they will have to enter the office to check in and get a badge, etc.; with the existing round school, there are doors about every 30 to 40 feet on the perimeter, and it is very difficult to secure the building; he further explained the features of the

new school: new kitchen and dining area, gymnasium, media center, etc.; the proposed structure will be two stories, and the roof will be reflective for energy efficiency; further, he noted one area of the building that will have expansion capabilities, if needed in the future; he also explained the exterior of the building noting the entrance into the school; the new athletic field in the front; parking lot in the front; and walking trail around the perimeter of the site; in addition, the area will be well landscaped with lots of green space; the proposed parking lot would meet the landscaping requirements of the ordinance; currently on the site there is no stormwater management; the design team has requested stormwater management be oversized, especially from a quantity standpoint; he further discussed the proposed stormwater management for the site and the regulations for stormwater; the proposed school should be a great asset to the community; the school division held a public meeting in September 2011, and there was overwhelming support, not only for a new school but tearing the old school down and replacing it with a new school; the school division received a lot of very good input from that meeting, and he noted there are a few things that were built into the plan based on the comments; one is the walking trail discussed earlier; originally, the plan called for just fire access on the back side of the property, but it did not loop around the building; one citizen suggested that they loop it around the building and make it a walking trail; so, this was done; also, comments were received about preserving trees, and so the trees in the rear and along Amy Lane will be preserved as best possible; lastly, there was a comment about limiting access to Amy Lane; a gate will be placed from the parking lot to Amy Lane to limit access during the day; when the buses are running, it will be opened and then closed afterward; he further noted the existing structure gave the city nearly 50 years of great service, and they certainly hope that the new structure will give us another 50 years of great service; with the addition of the gymnasium that can be used by Parks & Recreation and the whole community along with the athletic field that can be used by the community, it will be a great addition to South Salem and Salem as a whole; and

WHEREAS, Commission Member Thomasson asked what was the proposed timeline for the project; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Taliaferro noted that they would like to go to bid this spring and start construction the day school ends; they would like to have it open by the start of the school

year of 2013-14; Commission Member Thomasson asked how the razing of the existing school would work; Mr. Taliaferro noted more than likely they will demolish the portion of the school that overlaps with the new school, and he noted on the drawing where the construction would start; school will remain in session in the existing building, and a few trailers will probably have to be located on the north side to house some of the classes; then at the end of the 2012-13 school term, demolition can be completed on the existing school and hopefully by the start of the 2013-14 year the existing building will be gone and the new building will be open and ready to occupy; and

WHEREAS, Commission Member Robertson asked if the walking trail would be open to the public, and Mr. Taliaferro noted it would be; and

WHEREAS, Chair Murphy asked the about the construction ingress/egress – would it be the same as the existing entrance or would it come off Amy Lane; Mr. Taliaferro noted that it would be off Carolyn Road; and

WHEREAS, Chair Murphy asked if the athletic field would have lights, and Mr. Taliaferro noted that it would not be lighted; Mr. Taliaferro noted that the field will probably only be used by grade school students, and most of those games are between 5 and 7 p.m.; and

WHEREAS, Commission Member Robertson asked if the gate between the parking lot and Amy Lane would be opened only before and after school for school bus use, and Mr. Taliaferro noted that this was correct; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Humphrey, Principal of South Salem School, appeared before the Commission in support of the request; she noted that one of her biggest concerns is the safety; they have special needs students in the school and sometimes they run; with the school being round, there is a limited span to see in the hallway; she noted when she first became principal that she was concerned so she ordered radios for all grade levels so now they are able to locate a student very quickly; further, she noted that every space in the school is being used, in fact some teachers are using closets and storage spaces for office and classroom space; she loves the school, but it is time that the City has something that is safer and more modern for the students; she noted that it is a very family-oriented community, and everybody has been so excited about the project; and she stated they really appreciate the City doing this for them and the community; and

WHEREAS, Commission Member Robertson asked if the enrollment is growing at the school; Mrs. Humphrey noted that at the present time it is steady, which is about 452 students; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission thanked Jay Taliaferro for his presentation and noted that the project is impressive, exciting and long overdue; and

WHEREAS, no other person(s) appeared related to said request;

ON MOTION MADE BY COMMISSION MEMBER ROBERTSON, SECONDED BY COMMISSION MEMBER THOMASSON, AND DULY CARRIED, the Planning Commission of the City of Salem doth recommend to the Council of the City of Salem that the request of City of Salem School Board, property owner, for the issuance of a Special Exception Permit to allow primary/secondary educational facilities on the property located at 1600 Carolyn Road (Tax Map #212-1-1) be approved -- the roll call vote: all present - aye.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the same on motion adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

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Executive Secretary

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Chair