

Planning Commission Meeting
July 31, 2013
Verbatim Excerpt

SEA-2009-DR-008 – OAKCREST SCHOOL (Hunter Mill District)

Decision Only During Commission Matters
(Public Hearing held on June 20, 2013)

Commissioner de la Fe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have a decision only. It's on SEA 2009-DR-008, Oakcrest School. Mr. Chairman, the public hearing for this case was held on June 20th, 2013. At the public hearing, 16 individuals presented testimony. Most were opposed to granting the SEA. Though there were a variety of issues raised, the predominant one related to the traffic impact on Crowell Road. During the deferral period, we have received a significant amount of further public comment, both supporting and opposing the application. All of those comments will be incorporated into the public record. In order to address not only the traffic management issues, but also removal of the berm, screening, and the relationship to previous actions related to the application property, the decision was deferred until July 25th. A staff report addendum was published on the 25th, which recommended a further deferral to tonight to allow staff additional time to review the submissions from the applicant. A second addendum dated July 30th was published and distributed electronically. As discussed in the addenda, development conditions were developed to attempt to address the issues. Condition 3 references the new date for the SE Plat, which, among other things, changes – which, among other changes, primarily relate to a reduction in the amount of berm to be removed and additional screening. Condition 4 was added to clarify the relationship between land disturbance activities associated with this SEA and the prior approvals collectively known as SP 91-C-070. Conditions 18 and 19 were added to address traffic and transportation demand issues. Conditions 33 and 34 were added to address issues related to the removal of portions of the berm. By approving the original SE, the Board of Supervisors determined that the land use, a Category 3, Private School of General Education, was appropriate. This application is an amendment to the previously-approved Special Exception because the applicant has been unable to acquire the land necessary to achieve the traffic mitigation anticipated in the approved SE. To state the obvious, this is a complicated case. Many of the issues raised with respect to this application had their origins long before this application; however, we must deal with the application before us now, which basically involves site access and traffic management. There is no question that the access point on Crowell will increase traffic on that road and exacerbate an already difficult situation; however, the traffic analyses and conclusions of the folks that we look to for advice tell us that, with the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Crowell and Hunter Mill roads, lane improvements, and provision of safety devices to alert vehicular traffic traveling west on Crowell, the increased traffic can be handled. At one point, I considered adding a requirement that a second site access point be provided; however, since the staff has concluded that the single access point, with the associated road improvements, could handle student enrollment at its highest allowable limit, I did not find it prudent to make such a requirement at this time. I believe that the provisions of Development Condition 19 allow the staff to monitor the situation and make the necessary changes. As I stated before, this is a complicated case. It is particularly complicated for me because of the divergent recommendations provided by the Hunter Mill Land Use Committee and staff. When the Land Use Committee and staff agree, it is less complicated for

me to arrive at a recommendation to present to the Commission, whether it's to approve or deny. In this case, the Land Use Committee has recommended denial and staff has recommended approval. I know that in the past I have disagreed with staff. I can't recall a case when I disagreed with the Land Use Committee. In this case, however, since I believe that the issue before us relates not to the appropriate use of the land – since that issue was settled when the Board approved the original SE – but is basically a traffic management issue, I will recommend approval. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I MOVE THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS APPROVAL OF SEA 2009-DR-008, SUBJECT TO THE DEVELOPMENT CONDITIONS NOW DATED JULY 30TH, 2013. Thank you.

Commissioner Litzenberger: Second.

Chairman Murphy: Seconded by Mr. Litzenberger. Is there a discussion of the motion?

Commissioner Lawrence: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Lawrence.

Commissioner Lawrence: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was not present for the public hearing, but I reviewed the video and read all the materials so I think I'm competent to vote. Mr. Chairman, I've learned that every case is different, but successful applications have a common attribute. An acceptable balance is struck between what the applicant seeks in such terms as use, intensity, and land design, and the interests of the community in offsetting the impact of the development. The previous version of this application had achieved a balance. For a number of reasons, in my view, this version does not and I cannot support it. Thank you.

Chairman Murphy: Is there further discussion of the motion? Ms. Hedetniemi.

Commissioner Hedetniemi: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I took the time to go to Crowell Road and drive it and I concur with Mr. Lawrence's comments. I am not convinced that this solution is appropriate for the neighbors and for the traffic congestion that is very likely in that area – in an already congested area. So I will not support it.

Chairman Murphy: Further discussion of the motion? Ms. Hall.

Commissioner Hall: Yes. Mr. Chairman, I also agree with Commissioner Lawrence. I cannot support the application – probably for the more simple reason that – when we work with our communities they've got to trust what we say. And if we get their support for a particular remedy, then we have to ensure that remedy stays as part of the application. So, therefore, I cannot support any traffic going out on Crowley (sic).

Commissioner Flanagan: Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Murphy: Yes, Mr. Flanagan.

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes, I also had hoped that in the interim we would be given more consideration to a transportation alternative that would have located the circle – the proposed circle of the previous SE further south so that it would be only on two properties. And – however, in consulting with staff, I was found out that that was – that the owners of those properties were not amendable to that alternative. And so it would require condemnation if they wanted to pursue that and they – so I’m going to support the motion as enunciated.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Sargeant?

Commissioner Sargeant: I’ll wait until the end, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Murphy: All right. All those in favor of the motion –

Commissioner Donahue: Mr. Chairman? Mr. Chairman?

Commissioner de la Fe: Mr. Donahue.

Chairman Murphy: Oh, I’m sorry.

Commissioner Donahue: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I’m not sure exactly what some of these comments mean because not supporting the motion can take one of two directions. I’m going to have to oppose the motion. I’m going to have to oppose this application. And the reason I’m going to have to oppose it because I am clearly and emphatically on record with respect to Crowell Road – a number of years ago – saying this application doesn’t work with Crowell Road access. I’ve always believed that. I believed it three years ago; I believe it now. And we still have Crowell Road access. I’m going to tell just a little story that goes a little further. We’ve been all wound up about – about the turn – about the roundabout. The roundabout, for me, has always been a secondary consideration. The need for the roundabout – or it is made necessary by the fact that the Crowell Road access point does not work. That leaves us with Hunter Mill. If you have a Hunter Mill access point and a right-out only – and you would sure as heck have to have that – most of the folks dropping people off there, I think, are going to want to get back to the Toll Road. And with a right-out only, in order to get back to the Toll Road, they’re going to go a long, long ways without a roundabout to do so. That’s what made the roundabout necessary; nothing else. There’s nothing independent with respect to the roundabout other than you need the roundabout if you’re going to have a route (sic) – a right-only out on Hunter Mill Road. But the Crowell Road issue, it just has never – it has never gotten my support. Crowell Road is not going to accommodate, I don’t think, what it’s going to have to accommodate as an access point to this application without greatly, greatly inconveniencing people in the area. And also, I think it’s a dangerous – I think it’s a dangerous situation. So I’m going to have to oppose the application. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Murphy: Further discussion of the motion? All those in favor of the motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that it approve SEA 2009-DR-008, say aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Chairman Murphy: Opposed?

Commissioners Donahue, Hall, Hart, Hedetniemi, and Lawrence: No.

Chairman Murphy: Motion carries – well, I believe I'm going to take a division on this. Mr. Donahue?

Commissioner Donahue: No.

Chairman Murphy: Ms. Hedetniemi?

Commissioner Hedetniemi: No.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Litzenberger?

Commissioner Litzenberger: Yes.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Flanagan?

Commissioner Flanagan: Yes.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Lawrence?

Commissioner Lawrence: No.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. de la Fe?

Commissioner de la Fe: Yes.

Chairman Murphy: Ms. Hall?

Commissioner Hall: Yes. No! N, no. Yes, on Ms. Hall, but the answer is no.

Chairman Murphy: I thought Ms. Harsel came back.

Commissioner Hall: We'll have words over that one.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Hart?

Commissioner Hart: No.

Chairman Murphy: Mr. Sargeant?

Commissioner Sargeant: Mr. Chairman, in addition to not participating in the public hearing, I want the record to show that I am I not participating in the vote.

Chairman Murphy: Okay. Mr. Migliaccio?

Commissioner Migliaccio: Yes.

Chairman Murphy: Ms. Hurley?

Commissioner Hurley: Yes.

Chairman Murphy: The chair votes aye. And the motion passes 7 – 5 to one.

Commissioner de la Fe: Too many – 6-5-1.

Chairman Murphy: 6-5-1, I'm sorry.

Commissioner Hall: I want an auditor.

Commissioner de la Fe: Mr. Chairman –

Chairman Murphy: Yes, well you confused me with your vote. You're lucky I put it down in the right column.

Commissioner de la Fe: Mr. Chairman, I MOVE THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMEND REAFFIRMATION OF THE PREVIOUS MODIFICATION OF THE TRANSITIONAL SCREENING REQUIREMENTS ON THE EAST AND SOUTH TO FAVOR EXISTING VEGETATION AND AS SHOWN ON THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION AMENDMENT PLAT.

Commissioner Litzenberger: Second.

Chairman Murphy: Seconded by Mr. Litzenberger. Is there a discussion? All those in favor of that motion, say aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Chairman Murphy: Opposed?

Commissioners Hart and Lawrence: No.

Chairman Murphy: Motion carries. Is it the same division?

Commissioner Donahue: I support that motion, Mr. Chairman. As long as we're going to have the project anyway, I think it's a good motion to support.

Chairman Murphy: Okay, who votes no on that one? Mr. Lawrence votes no and Mr. Hart votes no.

Commissioner Sargeant: Not participating.

Chairman Murphy: And same abstention; Mr. Sargeant. Motion carries.

Commissioner de la Fe: Mr. Chairman, I MOVE THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMEND REAFFIRMATION OF THE PREVIOUS MODIFICATION OF THE LOCATION OF THE REQUIRED BARRIER ALONG THE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN BOUNDARIES TO FAVOR THAT BARRIER THAT IS SHOWN ON THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION AMENDMENT PLAT.

Commissioner Litzenberger: Second.

Chairman Murphy: Seconded by Mr. Litzenberger. Is there a discussion of that motion? All those in favor, say aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Chairman Murphy: Opposed?

Commissioners Hart and Lawrence: No.

Chairman Murphy: Motion carries. Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Hart vote no. Mr. Sargeant abstains. Is that it?

Commissioner de la Fe: That's it.

Chairman Murphy: Well you were right about one thing. You carried all the votes when you said this is a complicated application.

Commissioner de la Fe: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I realize that this is not satisfactory, probably, to anyone. And I also believe that given the development conditions that exist, this may not be the end of the case.

Chairman Murphy: You heard it here first.

Commissioner de la Fe: So, as I said, the origins on this extend more than 20 years and may be around another 20 years. And then it will be back in Dranesville.

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(The first motion carried by a vote of 6-5-1 with Commissioners Donahue, Hall, Hart, Hedetniemi, and Lawrence opposed; Commissioner Sargeant abstaining.)

(The second and third motions carried by a vote of 8-2-1 with Commissioners Hart and Lawrence opposed; Commissioner Sargeant abstaining; Commissioner Hall not present for the vote.)

JLC