

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Kinsey O'Shea, AICP, Development Administrator JKO

TITLE: RZN19-0002/ORD 1895-Request to rezone 33.871 acres of land formerly known as the Blacksburg High School at 520 Patrick Henry Drive (Tax Map Nos. 227-A 4, 227-A 4C & 227-A 4D) from R-4 Low Density Residential to PR Planned Residential by Jeanne Stosser of SAS Builders (applicant/contract purchaser) and Clint Pendleton of Parker Design Group (applicant's engineer/agent) for David Hagan of HS Development LLC (owner)

DATE: August 2, 2019

At the July 16, 2019 Planning Commission Work Session, several topics were discussed, focusing on:

- Overall architecture type and style
- Appearance of buildings and units to be of single-family in nature
- Green building certification such as LEED
- Accessibility features such as ADA accessibility and zero-step entries
- Limitations in the HOA documents addressing concern of student housing

The applicant provided a revised application dated July 23, 2019, and received via email July 26, 2019. A summary of the changes is below:

- Revised proffer statement including language addressing rental occupancy of the units. This language states that a standard lease must be used and include names of all tenants. The language further states that leases shall be a minimum of 12 months, and that no residence shall be leased by the bedroom. Furthermore, the lease shall require that the tenants are notified of obligations to abide by the HOA covenants and bylaws, including occupancy restriction provided in the PRD application.
- Language in the application section 6.2 addressing architectural style and features more in keeping with single-family appearance and individuality of units. Additionally, an exception to §4231 (b)(14) regarding varying front yard setbacks of adjacent units has been requested. Approval of this exception would mean that some side-by-side units will be flush with one another. However, language has been added that color or material change would occur in these instances where the exception applies.
- The 10' sidewalk along the west side of Road A (Price Street extension) is no longer indicated as "future" and has been included in the overall construction plan. However, the applicant states that it is contingent upon the availability of cost-sharing for the right-of-way improvements. *More information is needed regarding this commitment. At this time, it is unknown whether cost-sharing funding from any sources is available for this improvement. Planning and Engineering staff strongly recommends that the applicant include the construction of this 10' sidewalk as a part of the development, regardless of whether cost-sharing funds are available. This connection serves an integral part in the overall bicycle and pedestrian connectivity in the larger neighborhood context. Staff would support the construction of a 10' asphalt trail in lieu of a concrete sidewalk in this location. Furthermore, the application still shows the connecting*

sidewalk from Road A along Road C to Patrick Henry Drive as 5' wide. This connection should also be a 10' connection, either trail or sidewalk, in order to provide off-street bicycle connectivity to the bike lanes on Patrick Henry Drive.

- A 10' asphalt trail has been provided connecting around the north end of the development utilizing alleys for some connection segments.
- Road segments A and C have been revised such that Road A (Price Street Extension) meets in a 'T' intersection with Road C, which is now more continuous from Patrick Henry Drive, along the south side of the property, to the eastern edge of the property.
- The TIA has been revised to reflect the Engineering Department's comments, and has satisfied the staff comments.
- The application clarifies that 1.1 parking spaces per bedroom is the required minimum, and is achieved in the garages and driveways of individual units, but excludes on-street parallel parking from counting towards the required minimum.
- The project open space has been revised to provide a minimum of 20% in Area 2 (the townhouse development area). Calculations have been provided meeting this requirement and state that at least 21.6% open space is provided in Area 2.
- The applicant indicates that Earthcraft or LEED certification will not be pursued for this development.

ATTACHMENTS

- Application revised July 23, 2019
- Correspondence received between July 9 and August 2, 2019

Kinsey O'Shea

From: Don Langrehr <donforblacksburg@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 2, 2019 9:52 AM
To: Kinsey O'Shea
Subject: Fwd: Please leave R-4 zoning intact for the Old Blacksburg High School property

Hi Kinsey,
Can you ask Kafi to take a look at Ms. Homer's stormwater report concerns?
Thanks...Don

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Kimberley.Homer <homerk@vt.edu>
Date: Fri, Aug 2, 2019 at 8:47 AM
Subject: Please leave R-4 zoning intact for the Old Blacksburg High School property
To: Colley Tim <tim.colley@colleyarch.com>, Davis, Albert <davisa@vt.edu>, <jbspjones@verizon.net>, <jones.melissa.kay@gmail.com>, <akassoff@eee-consulting.com>, <donforblacksburg@gmail.com>, Gregg Moneyhun <greggm@shelteralternatives.com>, Michael Sutphin <msutphin@blacksburg.gov>

Honorable Commissioners Mr. Colley, Mr. Davis, Mr. Jones, Ms. Jones, Mr. Kassoff, Mr. Langrehr, Ms. Moneyhun, and Mr. Sutphin:

Regarding RZN19-0002, the application to rezone 520 Patrick Henry Drive, formerly known as Blacksburg High School and its surrounding woods and fields, I would like to encourage you to deny the applicant's rezoning request. The primary benefit to Blacksburg's citizens, preserving some of the property for recreational use, could be achieved without changing the zoning. The owner could sell parcels 1 and 3 to the Town for \$3.3 million, or perhaps a different price, and develop the remaining acres by right as R-4. Now that accessory dwelling units are permitted, they could be designed in, providing an affordable mix of housing options for seniors, first time home buyers, and single students living in owner-occupied homes. Keeping the zoning R-4 would preserve the character of the surrounding neighborhood and not so dramatically increase traffic as to make the recreational areas unsafe, or unduly burden the sanitary sewer and stormwater systems.

I've lived in this neighborhood for many years, and I love its walkability, mature trees, and mix of housing types. In asking myself if I'm opposed to any development in my neighborhood, I looked at the rezoning requests for Uptown Phase III (48 bedrooms), 1222 Patrick Henry Drive (278 bedrooms), and 1310 North Main (381 bedrooms), and they all have justification for requesting Planned Residential zoning in keeping with the Comprehensive Plan. The residents of these developments will be our neighbors, too, and I hope they will have walkability and recreational space to enjoy. I couldn't help but notice that these other PR rezoning requests were much easier to read, and in trying to compare the stormwater plan from 1310 North Main with the one for OBHS, ***I found two mistakes in the OBHS plan. One refers to Lexington instead of Blacksburg in the NOAA Atlas 14 Point Precipitation Frequency estimate, and the other lists the location of the proposed underground stormwater detention facility as N 37° 12' 13.36", W 80° 24' 28.22", which is just south of the Virginia Tech Airport. Hopefully this did not affect the overall calculations, but unlike the 1310 North Main plan, nowhere does it state that the underground system has been sized to provide capacity for 100 year storms. Also, I found it curious that the proposed OBHS development, with capacity***

for 551 cars, estimates 741 trips per day, but the 1310 North Main project, with capacity for 368 cars, estimates 2,965 vehicle trips per day.

I appreciate the efforts of the OBHS developers to preserve the mature trees on the site, and I really appreciate your efforts to analyze these very detailed proposals, but I fail to see how changing the zoning from R-4 to Planned Residential conforms with the purpose of the district, of the Comprehensive Plan, or with maintaining the quality of life for the citizens of Blacksburg. Please consider denying this request so a better plan can be made. Thank you.

Kimberley Homer
222 Price Street
homerk@vt.edu

Kinsey O'Shea

From: Leslie Hager-Smith
Sent: Monday, July 29, 2019 3:53 PM
To: Barbara Straub; Planning And Building; Town Council
Cc: Marc Verniel; Lawrence Spencer
Subject: RE: I have voiced my concerns as to the proposed rezoning of the old BHS...

I am very sorry for your loss, Mrs. Straub. I have not lived here as long as you: My husband and I came as young marrieds in 1982. But I have also raised my children in a Blacksburg that no longer exists. Those days when the kids could roam freely through a neighborhood of families well known to them is a precious memory now; and, I'm afraid a younger cohort of parents and children will not know the sanctity of it.

Even so, Blacksburg is the community I have come to love, and I still hold it close as a lovely place to live, work, play and raise children. We plan for a future that will include the activities you mention – bike riding on improved facilities, sledding, baseball and soccer on fields that we want to preserve. A few years ago, there was talk of shuttering Harding Avenue Elementary, but now the MCPS administration has moved mobile units to the site, an acknowledgement that it is as vital as ever.

Wildlife will not retreat from the area (though some of your neighbors would be happy if the bears did!) We hope to preserve the forested section at the back of the property, leaving that portion to passive recreation where kids can still clamber up the hill and explore the woods. Bluebirds will still find the track space open; and the town is making very intentional efforts to support the monarchs that migrate through our area. Ben Oderwald has just painted an exceptional mural at the entrance to the Huckleberry Trail, depicting monarchs on migration and our situation on the Eastern Divide. Also, we are seeking Monarch City USA status by implementing multiple “best practices” in landscape management. A wildflower field has been sown on South Main St., where lands were disturbed to accommodate the VT airport expansion. Several monarch-friendly plantings will also be added to Marcia's Park, in front of the Police Station.

What troubles me most as a steward of this town's quality of life, is the potential loss of “the communal flavor” you reference. Blacksburg in my experience has always been open, friendly and with a very high level of civic engagement. Our citizens have place attachment – but also attachment to each other. I take that very seriously. My goal is to preserve the town's character while at the same time honoring another value which Blacksburg holds dear: We welcome the stranger.

I remember when residents opened their own homes to students who had nowhere to go during the holidays and school breaks. There was many a Thanksgiving table circled with lonely but loved college students. The YMCA at Virginia Tech gathered newcomers for dinners, conversation circles, hikes and Brown Bag lunches. I remember Margot Sebba with her cardboard box of 3 x 5 cards, who effectively launched the International Programs in this town, well before VT understood the need. I recall that the Reverend Woody Leach made a space for gay students in the late 70s, to meet at Cooper House. This willingness to stretch ourselves has always been something that I found personally challenging but also valuable.

I absolutely agree with you that our population has become more transient and that we don't always know who is living next door to us. I blame technology, inflation and pace of life, in parts. Making a place in our community for people who might live in townhouses does not mean that we cannot extend them welcome. It is my earnest hope that allowing more density and accommodating alternative housing forms will help to preserve income diversity in our town – another thing I've always cherished here. I never aspired to live in a Boulder, a Menlo Park or Scarsdale . . .

To that end, I think the most important thing we can do as we address Ordinance 1895 is to focus on avoiding lifestyle conflicts by ensuring the proposed housing does not become student rentals. There are many places where student

apartments are appropriate, but this spot on Patrick Henry Dr. would not be one. There are several approaches which could be adopted, all within legal bounds – creating conditions in the HOA agreement; using income qualifications; allowing only one person on the lease; even the physical form of the townhouse can influence who lives there. Your suggestion to limit how many unrelated people can live in a neighborhood is a good one – it’s our standard practice.

With TORC, Ozmo, VTTI, Volvo and Block.One announcing hundreds of new jobs in our area, we are poised for considerable growth. It remains to be seen whether this period will be as transformative as the Hahn era of the 1960s and early ‘70s, when many of the houses in your neighborhood were built. We have every reason to believe that these newcomers will arrive with as much hope and good intention as we did. I hope we can make them a place in our town where they will find belonging, where they can make a contribution, and so that we can always gaze beyond our limits and see the mountains.

With kind regards,

Leslie Hager-Smith
Mayor

“ . . . the most important office, and the one which all of us can and should fill, is that of private citizen. The duties of the office of private citizen cannot under a republican form of government be neglected without serious injury to the public.” Justice Louis Brandeis

From: Barbara Straub <barbstraub@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, July 26, 2019 11:22 PM
To: Planning And Building <PlanningAndBuilding@blacksburg.gov>; Town Council <TownCouncil@blacksburg.gov>
Subject: I have voiced my concerns as to the proposed rezoning of the old BHS...

From: Barbara Straub, resident 301 North Drive, Blacksburg
Re: Old BHS property rezoning

I have voiced my concerns as to the proposed rezoning of the old BHS site several times already. Here I would like to put a more personal face on our neighborhood.

I have lived at 301 North Drive since 1974. For many years I knew my neighbors and their children well. Our children grew up riding bikes and skateboards at the track, sledding on the hill above the track and playing pickup games of baseball, football and soccer on the fields there.

My children learned to ride bikes, and later, drive a car in the parking lots at the old high school. They attended Harding Avenue Elementary together and some continued on to attend Blacksburg High School. They hiked the woods above the school for hours and I never worried about them. All the neighbors looked out for the children and were involved in the children’s activities.

I am also concerned about the wildlife in that area. We enjoy the deer, raccoons, skunks and occasional bear and hope the new construction does not invade their habitat. Monarch butterflies feed on and lay eggs on the milkweed surrounding the track. Bluebirds thrive in the open space the track and fields provide. It would be a shame if this small natural patch was destroyed for the sake of “development.”

The neighborhood is at risk of losing the communal flavor it has had for 40 years. More and more of the homes are now rentals with absentee landlords. The population has become more transient and we often do not know who is living in a particular home. A usually quiet area is now punctuated with construction sounds. Increased traffic is bound to limit children’s activities in the area. That is a sad state of affairs for our neighborhood.

My children were indeed fortunate to live in this area and have the advantages it provided. I write this as I remember and think of my son who died February 2018. I know he would want this neighborhood-his neighborhood-protected. If I can do that in some small way, perhaps he will be pleased.

Sincerely,
Barbara Straub

Kinsey O'Shea

From: Barbara Straub <barbstraub@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, July 26, 2019 11:22 PM
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Sincerely,
Barbara Straub
301 North Drive
barbstraub@icloud.com

Kinsey O'Shea

From: Barbara Straub <barbstraub@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, July 26, 2019 11:17 PM
To: Planning And Building
Subject: From: Barbara Straub, resident 301 North Drive, Blacksburg

From: Barbara Straub, resident 301 North Drive, Blacksburg
Re: Rezoning of old BHS property and additional concerns
Attn: Planning Commission

These are just some thoughts regarding the old BHS site rezoning request:

> 111 units are way too many to cram onto the proposed site. If you must rezone then I would request that a cap of around 80 units be enforced. This should not be a high density living space which it will be as proposed.

> Heavy duty trucks going up and down Grove Avenue are going to ruin the pavement. We can already see cracks and stress marks on Grove. Construction use should include repaving of Grove Avenue, contingent on damages rendered.

> Since we can safely assume more traffic will result not only on Grove but on Price Street, I strongly urge sidewalks be added on Price Street and possibly North Drive which also has no sidewalk. Children and adults in the neighborhood need to be able to walk safely to and from school and activities.

> The track and fields should be a non negotiable item and should remain in the hands of the Town of Blacksburg.

> It is interesting to note that Harding Avenue Elementary currently has 5 mobile units on site to be used in the coming school year. It really shows lack of foresight on the part of the county administrators, the school board and the town council to not preserve the old BHS site for a future elementary school which is obviously going to be needed at some point if children move into these proposed units.

> In the same vein, the neighborhoods served by Harding Avenue have at least twice had to protect Harding Avenue Elementary School from being closed, with success I might add, due to the parent involvement in the school. The school board, county and town should recognize that busing our children across town for whatever reason would be met with displeasure.

> Parking issues abound on Grove Avenue and North Drive, particularly when soccer, lacrosse, and other organized activities are using the fields. It will be increasingly difficult to find adequate parking without the additional spaces provided at the high school. Can the town post and enforce no parking ordinances on our properties?

> I must also note that it is interesting the university just came up with multi millions for yet another sports venue yet the university seems averse to provide housing for their own students. How does the council propose to protect our neighborhoods from student encroachment? At the very least a limit should be placed on the number of non-related people occupying a residence of any kind.

I certainly hope consideration will be made to the above concerns.

Thank you for your attention,

Barbara Straub

301 North Drive

barbstraub@icloud.com

RECEIVED

JUL 16 2019

Planning and Engineering
Department

Blacksburg Town Planning

I am writing you concerning the Planning Commission Public Hearing on July 2 where you will decide if the proposed PR has your approval or not. Although I would question the logic of Town Council's previous decision to not pay 3 million for the former high school property but now willing to pay current owners more than 3 million to obtain partial ownership of the front acreage by supporting the owners request to change the R-4 zoning to PR on 1.2 acres. At the neighborhood meeting on June 6th the general area neighbors consensus of the townhouse presentation was very negative. I am most concerned that the only area of size that exists within Blacksburg for R-4 Low Density Residential is at the former high school site. Since one of the principle developers involved has done an excellent development at Fiddlers Green one would expect the same quality of single family homes for the whole site (understanding this would be the case if PR is not allowed). Maintaining R-4 would be compatible to the single family housing that surrounds the high school site.

The Town Mayor and Councilman Bush recent news article discussed the impact of the Virginia Tech increased student enrollment. One concern was the need to provide the additional necessary faculty housing within the town to support the added student enrollment. This is a possible argument to maintain R-4 single units near the town recreation center and keep incoming faculty from moving away from town.

Respectfully, James Hardell
233 Price Street

Copy: transmission Planning Commissioners

Anne McClung

From: Gregory Kadlec <kadlec@vt.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, July 9, 2019 12:16 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: My thoughts on the old Blacksburg High School property

Planning Committee Members

I am writing to recap my comments from the July 2 meeting – thanks in advance for your time.

My wife and I moved here in 1992 and we have liked everything about Blacksburg -- except how student housing is randomly scattered about the town. By all appearances the proposed development is more of the same. To be fair, we hold nothing against the developers for having seized a golden opportunity. That said, the only way this is going to play out as beneficial for the town is if: (1) the town buys ALL of the land from the developers, or (2) the proposed development is in fact for the people of Blacksburg and not another one-off piece-meal solution to Virginia Techs housing problem.

There are many reasons to be leery of adding student-oriented housing to this neighborhood.

1. Having student housing scattered randomly through town has resulted in Blacksburg having an unusually high accident rate for a town of our size – even compared to other college towns -- just ask your insurance provider. There is no reason for the Town to put the safety of its long-term residents at risk by attracting student drivers into their neighborhoods.
2. There is an inherent conflict in placing town recreational facilities in close proximity to student housing. This is evident from the long history of students monopolizing the town's recreational field in the Shenandoah neighborhood – rendering it the field of last resort for town sporting enthusiasts. As such, the proposed PRD is likely to amount to the Town providing a dog park and country club for college students.
3. The density of student housing (i.e., the proposed project) is out of character with the three bordering neighborhoods where there are less than 2 houses per acre (counting streets). Indeed, the entire Apperson neighborhood has 1.2 houses per acre. How did they ever come up with 111 units on 10 acres for their proposal? In a neighborhood meeting with the developers they even acknowledged that if the built by-right the most they could fit is 88.

Clashes between college student and town residents are older than Harvard – but that is not justification for letting a lack of neighborhood planning undermine the quality of life in Blacksburg. Let's not let this development become the local poster child for "fool me twice".

Thanks again

Greg