TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT
Planning Board Meeting of October 1, 2020

File No./Petitioner:  SDP-20-051, Howard County Board of Education

Project Name:  Talbott Springs Elementary School

DPZ Planner:  Brenda Luber

Request:  Approval of a Site Development Plan for an 88,229 square foot 2-story elementary school, parking area, multi-purpose field and stormwater management, and approval of an adjustment to the lot coverage requirement.

Recommendations:  Approve the SDP and lot coverage adjustment subject to complying with the remaining Subdivision Review Committee (SRC) comments and any conditions by the Planning Board.

Location:  The New Town (NT) zoned site is located at 9550 Basket Ring Road; identified as Tax Map 36, Parcel 283, Open Space Lot 216 of the Village of Oakland Mills, Section 4, Area 1. The property is on the east side of Basket Ring Road, north of the intersection with Whiteacre Road. This plan is being processed under the existing NT-Open Space designation in accordance with FDP-51-A-II, per Section 125.0.G. of the Zoning Regulations.
**Vicinal Properties**: Zoned NT and include

- **North**: NT-Apartment property developed with a private drive and residential apartments and Open Space owned by the Columbia Association.
- **East**: NT-Open Space owned by the Columbia Association.
- **South**: Whiteacre Road and NT-Apartment property developed with residential apartments.
- **West**: Basket Ring Road and NT-Apartment property developed with residential apartments.

**Legal Notice**: The property was properly posted and verified by DPZ in accordance with the legal requirements.

I. **General Information**:

**Site History**:

- FDP-51-A, Village of Oakland Mills, Section 4, Area 1, recorded on July 17, 1969.
- SDP-72-126, Village of Oakland Mills, Section 4, Area 1, Open Space Lot 216 development of the existing elementary school.

**Existing Site Conditions**: The site contains the existing 53,942 square foot elementary school, portable classrooms, play areas and 77 car parking spaces and 6 bus parking spaces accessed from Whiteacre Road.

**Regulatory Compliance**: The project must comply with Section 125.0.G. of the Zoning Regulations, the criteria listed in FDP-51-A-II, the amended Fifth Edition of the Howard County Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, the Howard County Design Manual, the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, and the Howard County Landscape Manual.

II. **Description of the Site Development Plan Proposal and Analysis**:

**Proposed Site Improvements**: The applicant seeks Site Development Plan approval for an 88,229 square foot 2-story elementary school, parking area, multi-purpose field and stormwater management. The existing school will remain occupied and operational until the new replacement school is fully constructed and ready for occupancy. Once the new school is occupied, the existing school will be demolished. The new playing fields and parking lot will be created where the existing school is located.

**Setback Requirements**: Per the FDP, structures shall not be within 30 feet of the right-of-way of any public street (Basket Ring and Whiteacre Roads), and within 25 feet of any property line. The proposed site improvements comply with the setbacks.

**Building Height**: The FDP does not impose a height limit if buildings are consistent with a site development plan approved by the Howard County Planning Board.

**Lot Coverage**: The FDP limits no more than 10% of the open space land to be covered by structures except in accordance with a site development plan approved by the Howard County Planning Board. The proposed school will exceed the 10% lot coverage by 3.96% for a total lot coverage of 13.96%. Adjustment criteria is addressed for consideration in Section III.
Roads: No new roads are proposed. The site access will be obtained from Basket Ring and Whiteacre Roads.

Parking: The FDP states no parking requirements are imposed upon any of the land devoted to open spaces uses, however, the Planning Board may impose parking requirements for structures on open space at the time a site development plan is submitted for approval. The plan proposes 110 parking spaces and 10 bus parking spaces. The Howard County Public School System administration determines the number of parking spaces for school properties. The school administration determined 110 spaces are sufficient for this project.

Landscaping: Landscaping is proposed in accordance with the Landscape Manual. A berm and additional landscaping is proposed along the northern boundary to provide screening for the adjacent residential community. In addition, landscaping is provided along the western property boundary to provide screening for the adjacent neighborhood. Landscaping will be provided along Whiteacre Road to buffer headlights from the adjacent apartment community to the south.

Stormwater Management: The stormwater management is provided by bioretention facilities and micro-bioretention facilities.

Environmental Considerations: The site is not constrained by environmental features.

Forest Conservation: The property is exempt from Section 16.1200 of the Howard County Code for Forest Conservation Easement because it is zoned NT and because the property is part of a planned unit development, per Section 16.1202(b)(1)(ii).

III. **Lot Coverage Adjustment Review Criteria**

The existing school and portable classrooms will be replaced with a new 2-story elementary school approximately 88,229 square foot in size. The proposed school will exceed the 10% lot coverage by 3.96% for a total lot coverage of 13.96%. Per Section 125.0.G.4.d of the Zoning Regulations, the Planning Board may grant a coverage adjustment if:

- The adjustment will not alter the character of the neighborhood or area in which the property is located, will not impair the appropriate use of development of adjacent property, and will not be detrimental to the public welfare; and
- The adjustment (a) is needed due to practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships which arise in complying strictly with the Final Development Plan; and/or (b) results in better design that would be allowed by strict compliance with the development criteria.

The purpose of this project is to increase floor space in response to a growing school enrollment in the area and to address deficiencies in curriculum and operational needs of the school. The existing school building and accessory structures cover 14.59% of the property and this project will decrease the coverage to 13.96%.

The proposed school has been rotated slightly which better responds to the existing street corner alignment and a berm with additional landscaping is provided along the northern property to provide screening for the adjacent residential community. A landscaping buffer will also be provided along the western boundary to provide screening for the residential community. For the properties located to the south of the property, landscaping will be provided to buffer headlights. The main entrance to the school maintains frontage along White Acre Road, access to the bus lot and parking area remain off White Acre Road, and the main recreational spaces will now be organized adjacent to the existing open space to the east. These overall site improvements are in keeping with the existing character of the neighborhood, do not impair the development of adjacent property, and will not be detrimental to the public welfare.
The building coverage for the existing school is 14.59%, including the 10 portable classrooms which are needed for current enrollment. The new school is designed with a partial second story at the rear of the building to provide needed classroom space with a lot coverage of 13.96%. The site has been designed to keep the existing school in operation during the construction of the new school. The approval of this adjustment would allow the school system to implement their plans to expand floor space for a growing enrollment and to meet curriculum and operational needs for students and staff. Strict compliance with the 10% lot coverage would require areas of the existing coverage/structure to be removed and not replaced. Proposing an alternate building design with a complete second level addition is not feasible given the BOE regulations which only allows classrooms for pre-K, kindergarten and first grade students on the first floor level. The proposed plan represents a better design because it not only allows for the school system to meet their enrollment needs, but it results in a school designed to conserve energy, conserve water, improve the quality of indoor environment and increase the use of sustainable materials. In addition, all the children will be educated within one new building instead of an aged building and 10 portable classrooms.

**SRC Action:** The SRC recommends approval subject to minor review comments.

**Recommendation:** Approve the SDP and lot coverage adjustment subject to complying with the remaining Subdivision Review Committee (SRC) comments and any conditions by the Planning Board.

Amy Gowan, Director
Department of Planning and Zoning

9/2/2020