



PLANNING
Town of Chapel Hill
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ATTACHMENT 3

CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY MINUTES COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2006, 7:00 P.M.

Chairperson Jonathan Whitney called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Commission members present were George Cianciolo, Gretchen MacNair, Laura King Moore, Scott Nilsen, and Robin Whitsell. Staff members present were Senior Planner Kay Pearlstein, and Planning Technician Kay Tapp.

ST. THOMAS MORE CHURCH (File No. 7.73.S)

A request for a Concept Plan has been submitted which proposes changes to the St. Thomas More Church. The Concept Plan proposal includes changes to access and circulation with a new road alignment for Carmichael Street and a new second driveway for the St. Thomas More campus Phase 1, an increase in floor area, and an increase in parking spaces. An increase to floor area of 133,000 square feet is proposed to include a Parish Center, gymnasium, athletic field, library, classrooms, and an Art and Music Building. An increase to parking is proposed for 130 new spaces. The 20.5-acre site is zoned Residential-5-Conditional (R-5-C). The site is located at 940 Carmichael Street between Laurel Hill Road and South Road (see area map on back). The Concept Plan also proposes to modify the Master Land Use Plan for the campus. The site is identified as Chapel Hill Township, Tax Map 73, Lot 5.

CONCEPT PLAN PRESENTATION

The applicants for the St. Thomas More campus expansion presented a power point presentation of images taken from a scale model of the proposed campus expansion. The Master Plan for the campus is proposed to be realized through a series of construction phases completed within a 15-year span of time. The design team presented a concept plan for 133,000 square feet of floor area and several outdoor activity spaces.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

1. A neighbor on Fern Lane expressed concerns about traffic in the area and the realignment of Carmichael Street proposed with the application. He stated that from 2:45 to 3:00 p.m., the Laurel Hill Road/Fern Lane intersection is difficult to make a turning motion now. In addition, he stated that OWASA is planning to construct two large ditches along The Pinetum and could make traveling in the area even worse.

COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. Commissioner Jonathan Whitney asked if the campus expansion is being coordinated with UNC campus expansion. The applicant replied that they would like to work with the University. They stated that they had sent a letter to the University of their hope of working together.

Commissioner Whitney asked for an explanation of how stormwater was proposed to be managed. The applicant responded that the existing basin is proposed to be enlarged to handle additional capacity expected with the new building expansion. In response to the questions of proposed playing fields, the applicant responded that the existing wooded area is to be cleared and graded.

Commissioner Whitney also expressed concern with light spillage and lighting in general. The applicant responded that the parking lot lights will be on timers and that the sports fields will not be lit initially but may in the future.

Caution about the reduced width of the buffer along Carmichael Street proposed with the expansion was expressed. Commissioner Whitney stressed the importance of maintaining good buffers along Fordham Blvd. and that future study of all buffers was important.

2. Commissioner Robin Whitsell asked what neighbors thought about the rerouting of Carmichael Street. She has heard that residents have a huge wish that Laurel Hill Road would continue to Fordham Blvd. She was also concerned about the diminished buffer adjacent to houses off St. Johns Place and recycling/refuse location. The applicant replied that the new refuse/recycling location would be in the new parking lots.
3. Commissioner Laura Moore likes the open space, courtyard, and architecture of the proposal. She asked if the parishioners would continue parking off Carmichael Street. The applicant responded they would.

She likes the efficient parking layout that appeared to flow well with the exception of the middle driveway entrance where parking is shown on both sides of the driveway. She suggests a more free-flowing middle drive aisle with removal of the parking area which appears forced.

4. Commissioner George Cianciolo thinks the plan is good overall and that traffic management should be the first concern of the expansion plans. He supports the location for the school and suggests that UNC be contacted to consider using the school space at night. He encourages the applicant to employ “green building” techniques.

A letter from the Aldersgate United Methodist Church was submitted to the Town following the meeting and is attached.

Prepared for: Jonathan Whitney, Chair
Prepared by: Kay Pearlstein, Staff 