



**ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING**  
**STAFF REPORT SUMMARY**

<b>Project Name:</b> SP202000002 MonU Park	<b>Staff:</b> Scott Clark, Senior Planner II
<b>Planning Commission (PC) Hearing:</b> April 20, 2021	<b>Board of Supervisors (BOS) Hearing:</b> to be determined
<b>Owner:</b> Crockett Corporation	<b>Applicant:</b> Monticello United Soccer Club
<b>Acreage:</b> 79.5 acres	<b>Special Use Permit(s) for:</b> 10.2.2.4 Swim, golf, tennis or similar athletic facilities (reference 5.1.16)
<b>Tax Map Parcel (TMP):</b> 04600-00-00-018C0	<b>Zoning/by-right use:</b> RA -- Rural Areas: agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential density (0.5 unit/acre in development lots); FH Flood Hazard - Overlay to provide safety and protection from flooding; EC Entrance Corridor - Overlay to protect properties of historic, architectural or cultural significance from visual impacts of development along routes of tourist access
<b>Magisterial District:</b> Rivanna	<b>Location:</b> Polo Grounds Road, approximately ¼ mile east of its intersection with US 29
<b>School Districts:</b> Hollymead – Sutherland – Albemarle	<b>Conditions:</b> Yes
<b>Development Area:</b> No	<b>Requested # of Dwelling Units/Lots:</b> N/A
<b>Proposal(s):</b> Request to amend special use permit for an athletic club with 4 soccer fields and 96 parking spaces, to increase the number of fields to 7; to extend the hours of operation; to remove the condition prohibiting games during July and August; to remove the existing condition prohibiting irrigation; and to remove the condition prohibiting games and practice sessions occurring on the same day as specified major event at the existing SOCA facility also located on Polo Grounds Road.	<b>Comp. Plan Designation:</b> Rural Areas
<b>Character of Property:</b> Floodplain of the South Fork Rivanna River – largely open former agricultural fields with some wooded areas	<b>Use of Surrounding Properties:</b> Residential and mixed-use, riparian open space
<b>Factors Favorable:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Upgrades to Polo Grounds Road and the US 29 intersection have addressed the previous concerns about traffic capacity for this use.</li> <li>2. The maximum of four games at any one time would still apply, meaning that the maximum level of use would not greatly increase.</li> <li>3. The low-impact character of the use would still allow the land to be returned to agricultural use.</li> </ol>	<b>Factors Unfavorable:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The proposed increase in operational hours, additional months allowed for use throughout the year, and ability to hold practice sessions simultaneously with games would increase daily users and vehicular trips to and from the site. However, the level of use on the site would still be capped by the existing 96 parking spaces, which are not proposed to increase.</li> </ol>
<b>Recommendation:</b> Staff recommends approval of SP202000002 with conditions.	

**STAFF CONTACT:**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION:**  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

Scott Clark, Senior Planner II  
April 20, 2021  
TBD

**PETITION(s):**

PROJECT: SP202000002 MonU Park

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Rivanna

TAX MAP/PARCEL: 04600-00-00-018C0

LOCATION: Southeast corner of US 29 and Polo Grounds Road (Route 643).

PROPOSED: Request to amend special use permit for an athletic club with 4 soccer fields and 96 parking spaces, to increase the number of fields to 7; to extend the hours of operation; to remove the condition prohibiting games during July and August; to remove the existing condition prohibiting irrigation; and to remove the condition prohibiting games and practice sessions occurring on the same day as specified major event at the existing SOCA facility also located on Polo Grounds Road.

ZONING CATEGORY/GENERAL USAGE: RA -- Rural Areas: agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential density (0.5 unit/acre in development lots); FH Flood Hazard - Overlay to provide safety and protection from flooding; EC Entrance Corridor - Overlay to protect properties of historic, architectural or cultural significance from visual impacts of development along routes of tourist access

SECTIONS: 10.2.2.4 Swim, golf, tennis or similar athletic facilities (reference 5.1.16)

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAND USE/DENSITY: Rural Areas - preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources/ density ( .5 unit/ acre in development lots)

ENTRANCE CORRIDOR: Yes

**CHARACTER OF THE AREA:**

The site is located along the South Fork Rivanna River and Polo Grounds Road, in a narrow portion of the Rural Areas between the Hollymead development area (to the north) and Neighborhood 2 (across the river to the south). The portion of the Rural Area containing this site is largely floodplain, and the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir dam is located approximately one-half mile upstream. The adjacent Development Areas are located on higher land above the river valley. To the north, the Hollymead area includes existing residential developments. The mixed-use Brookhill development is directly to the north, across Polo Grounds Road. Neighborhood 2, to the south, includes residential developments and commercial areas along US 29.

Since the original approval of a special use permit for soccer use on this site (see below), Polo Grounds Road and its intersection with US 29 have been significantly upgraded to accommodate the volume of traffic from the ongoing Brookhill development and the existing residences along Polo Grounds.

**PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY:**

On September 12, 2012, the Board of Supervisors approved SP201000036, which permits an athletic facility with four soccer fields and 96 parking spaces, with several conditions. Staff lists recommended amendments to the original conditions below. Outdoor lighting and amplified sound were prohibited.

**DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL:**

The current proposal is to amend the existing special use permit to alter several conditions of the original approval:

- The number of fields would be increased from four to seven. However, no more than four fields could be used for competitions at any one time. This would permit the applicants to have warm-ups and non-game uses on the extra fields without increasing the main level of use on the site, which comes from formal games.

Also, it would allow the applicants to rotate uses among more fields, reducing wear in any given location. (Note that these fields exist only as marks on the grass, and do not include any built infrastructure.)

- The hours of operation for events would be extended from the existing limits (Monday – Friday 11 am to 4 pm, Saturday – Sunday 11 am to 6 pm) to 8 am to sunset daily.
- The existing seasonal limits on operation, including the prohibition on game play during July and August (imposed to limit traffic conflicts with the SOCA facility on the same road) would be removed.
- The condition prohibiting uses on the MonU site on the same days as specific named SOCA uses would be removed. (This condition included a section stating that it would no longer apply if the Planning Director found that it was no longer necessary due to road improvements.)
- The condition prohibiting irrigation of the facility would be replaced with a condition permitting irrigation with temporary pumps using water from the South Fork Rivanna River.
- The applicants have not requested to change the prohibitions on lighting or outdoor amplified sound.

## **COMMUNITY MEETING**

The Planning Director approved the applicant’s request to waive the requirement for a community-input process on May 1, 2020, due to the limited scale of the proposed use and the upgrades to the public roads accessing the site.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST**

*Section 33.39(B) states that the Commission, in making its recommendation, shall consider the same factors found in Section 33.40(B):*

- 1. *No substantial detriment. Whether the proposed special use will be a substantial detriment to adjacent parcels.***

No discernible detriment to adjacent parcels is expected from this proposal. Outdoor lighting and amplified sound would still be prohibited, limiting visual and noise impacts on the surrounding area.

- 2. *Character of the nearby area is unchanged. Whether the character of the adjacent parcels and the nearby area will be changed by the proposed special use.***

The recreational use would remain the same in character, although increasing somewhat in scale. For the surrounding parcels, this would still be an undeveloped open-space site.

The requested longer operating hours and removal of seasonal limitations would mean that the site was used more overall. However, the fact that the number of parking spaces would not increase means that the peak level of use at any one time would not greatly increase. As limited in the proposed conditions below, the increase to seven fields would still only allow four games at one time. Any simultaneous use of the additional three fields would be limited to activities such as practices and warmups. The parking area and the restriction on games would mean that any increase in maximum site occupation would be limited.

- 3. *Harmony.***

*Whether the proposed special use will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter,*

The purposes of the RA zoning district include:

*Preservation of agricultural and forestal lands and activities;*

The property would remain in its current open-space state, and would allow the parcel to return to agricultural use at any time.

*Water supply protection;*

The property is located downstream of any public-water supplies located in the Rural Areas.

*Limited service delivery to the rural areas; and*

Neither the approved use nor the proposed amendment requires the provision of public water or sewer service. Occasional calls for EMT service could be generated by the use. However, as the number of fields available for games would not change, the proposed amendment would not increase this demand.

*Conservation of natural, scenic, and historic resources.*

Other than the existing parking area, the proposed use does not include any built facilities that would impact the visual character of the Rural Areas or the US 29 Entrance Corridor.

Maintaining the existing requirement for an archaeological survey before any grading occurs would protect the archaeological value of this site, which (from staff consultation with professional archaeologists) is likely to include significant resources from past occupation of the site by the Monacan Nation. (The applicants do not currently expect to carry out any grading, but staff believes that this condition is important to preventing future impacts.)

***with the uses permitted by right in the district,***

The low-impact character of the use is not expected to have significant impacts on the potential of the Rural Areas to accommodate agriculture, forestry, or conservation.

***with the regulations provided in Section 5 as applicable,***

Section 5.1.16 contains supplemental regulations for this use (“swim, golf, tennis, or similar athletic facilities”), but they apply to swimming pools and concessions, and are not relevant to this proposed use.

***and with the public health, safety, and general welfare.***

During the review of SP201000036, the surrounding community had concerns about the traffic impacts of this use, due to the limited capacity of Polo Grounds Road, which was a two-lane road whose intersection with US 29 often created long waits for vehicles accessing US 29. Since that time, the intersection and the western end of Polo Grounds Road have been significantly upgraded to accommodate the expected traffic from the Brookhill development, which sits adjacent to the soccer facility to the north. These upgrades added signalization to the intersection, added three turn lanes to Polo Grounds Road at the intersection and ended westbound access to Rio Mills Road (which required vehicles to wait to cross both sides of US 29). Transportation-planning staff have reviewed the proposed amendment against the upgraded traffic facilities, and has found that the upgraded road and intersection can accommodate the proposed changes to this use, especially given that parking capacity for MonU would not be increased.

The applicants have found that they could provide better maintenance of the soccer fields if they were permitted to irrigate the site. They have consulted with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), which is the agency that controls and issues permits for river-water withdrawals, and DEQ staff has

provided the applicants with guidance on how to remain below the threshold that would require a permit (10,000 gallons/day – far above any need for field watering). Staff has included a condition requiring that the applicants follow aspects of that DEQ guidance that would be practical for Zoning staff to enforce, such that the irrigation uses temporary over-the-bank hoses and does not disturb riverside vegetation.

The site is located approximately one-half mile downstream of the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir dam, which impounds the community's largest reservoir. The Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority (RWSA), which manages the dam facility and is responsible for maintaining compliance with Federal dam-safety regulations, has recommended that the proposed soccer facility be required to post signage warning of the dangers of a dam breach and giving safety information. Staff has recommended a condition of approval below that would impose this requirement.

**4. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. *Whether the proposed special use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.***

The County's comprehensive planning goals for the Rural Areas generally support agriculture, forestry, water protection, and natural and cultural resource protection. While this is a recreational use that does not directly support those goals, its low-impact nature and lack of built facilities mean that impacts are limited, and that the site can return to Rural Area uses in the future if needed.

**SUMMARY:**

After review of this request, staff have identified the following factors of this proposal that are favorable to this proposal.

**Factors favorable to this request include:**

1. Upgrades to Polo Grounds Road and the US 29 intersection have addressed the previous concerns about traffic capacity for this use.
2. The maximum of four games at any one time would still apply, meaning that the maximum level of use would not greatly increase.
3. The low-impact character of the use would still allow the land to be returned to agricultural use.

**Factors unfavorable to this request include:**

1. The proposed increase in operational hours, additional months allowed for use throughout the year, and ability to hold practice sessions simultaneously with games would increase daily users and vehicular trips to and from the site. However, the level of use on the site would still be capped by the existing 96 parking spaces, which are not proposed to increase.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

Based on the findings described in this report and factors identified as favorable, **staff recommends approval of special use permit application SP202000002 MonU Park with the following conditions:**

1. Development of the use ~~must~~ shall be in general accord with the conceptual plan entitled "Concept Plan for Special Use Permit Application for MonU Park" prepared by Meridian Planning Group LLC, and dated 04-25-12. To be in general accord with the plan, development ~~shall~~ must reflect the following central

features essential to the design of the development:

- a) ~~Number of fields~~
- a) Number and location of parking spaces
- b) Absence of structures

Minor modifications to the plan that do not conflict with the elements above may be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

2. The area used for playing fields must be in general accord with the layout shown on the plan titled "Field Layout Plan", dated "January 22, 2020." The total number of playing fields must not exceed seven, and the total number of playing fields used for games at any one time must not exceed four.

3. Before establishing a fifth playing field on the site, the applicant must ~~shall~~ install flood-safety signage to the satisfaction of the Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority.

~~2. Games and practice sessions shall only be held during the months of March, April, May, June, September, October, and November. In addition, during July and August, no games shall be held, but practice sessions solely for club members are permitted. Portable toilets are permitted on site during all months when soccer activity is permitted.~~

4. Hours of operation for events on Saturdays and Sundays ~~must~~ shall be no earlier than ~~11:00 a.m.~~ 8:00 a.m. and no later than ~~6:00 p.m.~~ the time of sunset as calculated by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration.

~~4. Hours of operation for events Monday through Friday shall be no earlier than 4:00 p.m. and no later than sunset.~~

~~5. No~~ Overnight parking ~~shall~~ be is not permitted on the site. The entrance to the property must ~~shall~~ be closed by a locked gate when the playing fields are not in use.

~~6. No~~ Outdoor lighting is not permitted for this use.

~~7. No artificial irrigation shall be used or installed for the soccer fields.~~ Any irrigation of the soccer fields must comply with the following requirements, as recommended by Virginia Department of Environmental Quality:

- a) Irrigation water must be withdrawn from the Rivanna River utilizing a temporary over-the-bank hose;
- b) Permanent changes to the riverbank must not be made, and
- c) Existing trees along the riverbank must not be removed.

8. The use of amplified sound system(s) is not permitted for this use.

~~9. No~~ Fill ~~shall~~ must not be placed within the portion of the property within the Flood Hazard Overlay District.

10. The driveway and parking area ~~shall~~ must be a pervious surface unless otherwise required by the County Engineer pursuant to § 4.12.15(a) of the Zoning Ordinance. Upon termination of the playing field use, the surfacing of the driveway and parking area ~~shall~~ must be removed and the previously-disturbed land surface ~~shall~~ must be returned to vegetated cover or an unpaved accessway.

11. A Phase I archaeological survey shall must be completed for areas to be graded for this use, followed by appropriate mitigation measures as approved by the Planning Director, prior to issuance of a grading permit.

~~12. No games or practice sessions shall be held at MonU Park on the same dates that the following tournaments and tryouts are held at the SOCA sports complex on Polo Grounds Road:~~

~~a) U11 / U12 (combined) tryouts and U13/ U14 (combined) tryouts, which are currently held at the end of April or during the month of May.~~

~~b) The Spring recreational tournament, which is currently called the Sunburn and which is currently held on one weekend in June.~~

~~e) The Labor Day weekend tournament, which is currently called the College Showease and which is currently held on the Saturday and Sunday of Labor Day weekend.~~

~~d) The Fall recreational tournament, which is currently called the Frostbite and which is typically held on one weekend in late November or early December.~~

~~This condition shall no longer apply if the Planning Director determines in writing that road improvements or other changes to the existing traffic conditions on Polo Grounds Road, including its intersection at U. S. Route 29, make this condition unnecessary.~~

#### **POSSIBLE PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS – SP202000002:**

- A. If the Planning Commission chooses to recommend approval of this special use permit:  
I move to recommend approval of SP202000002 MonU Park with the conditions outlined in the staff report.
- B. If the Planning Commission chooses to recommend denial of this special use permit:  
I move to recommend denial of SP202000002 MonU Park for (state reasons for denial).

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. [Site Map](#)
2. [Area Map](#)
3. [Conceptual Plan](#)