



ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

Project Name: SP-2025-00001 Field School of Charlottesville	Staff: Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager
Planning Commission Public Hearing: May 27, 2025	Board of Supervisors Hearing: June 18, 2025
Owner(s): Field School of Charlottesville	Applicant(s): Field School of Charlottesville, represented by Line and Grade Engineering
Acreage: 21 acres	Special Use Permit for: private school under Section 10.2.2.5 of the Zoning Ordinance
TMP: 06000000006800 Location: South side of Barracks Road, approximately 750 feet west of the intersection with Montvue Drive	Zoning/by-right use: RA, Rural Area – agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential density (0.5 unit/acre in development lots); private schools by special use permit. By special use permit, this facility may have up to 150 students.
Magisterial District: Jack Jouett	Conditions: Yes EC: No
School Districts: Greer (Elementary), Journey (Middle), Albemarle (High)	
Proposal: Amend special use permit for a private school (Sec. 10.2.2.5) to amend Condition #9 to extend time for construction by one year.	Requested # of Dwelling Units/Lots: No dwelling units proposed.
RA (Rural Areas): Yes	Comp. Plan Designation: Rural Areas - preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources; residential density 0.5 unit/acre in development lots.
Character of Property: Currently vacant and mostly wooded property with a small pond and some areas of clearing and fill.	Use of Surrounding Properties: Large- and small-lot residences, farms, other open land, and forests. Colthurst subdivision is to the south and west.
Positive Aspects: 1. The proposed changes are not expected to have an impact on the surrounding area. No enrollment increase is requested and no revisions to the site layout or hours of operation are requested.	Concerns: 1. None identified.
Recommendation: Special Use Permit: Staff recommends approval of SP-2025-00001.	

STAFF CONTACT:
PLANNING COMMISSION:
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager
May 27, 2025
June 18, 2025

SP-2025-00001 Field School of Charlottesville

PETITION

PROJECT: SP-2025-00001 Field School of Charlottesville

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Jack Jouett

TAX MAP/PARCEL: 06000000006800

LOCATION: South side of Barracks Road, approximately 750 feet west of the intersection with Montvue Drive

PROPOSAL: Amend special use permit SP201900012 for a private school (Sec. 10.2.2.5) to amend Condition #9 to extend time for construction by one year.

ZONING: RA Rural Areas

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Rural Area

CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA

The property consists of one parcel totaling 21 acres. The site fronts on Barracks Road, west of the city of Charlottesville and just west of Neighborhood 7 of the Southern and Western Urban Neighborhoods Development Area. The property is mostly wooded, but some areas of the site have been cleared. There is a 3-acre manmade pond fed by a stream on the property and the Water Protection Ordinance (WPO) designates a 100-foot buffer around the pond and stream.

The cleared areas of the site were part of a previous fill/waste site on the property. There are two existing entrances to the site from Barracks Road. One of the entrances was formerly used to provide access to the fill site. The other entrance is gated and adjacent to the pond. This entrance is still used for maintenance of the dam and pond.

Neighboring properties are mostly single family-detached residential lots. The Colthurst Farm subdivision (approximately 60 homes) is directly south and west of the property and consists of mostly 1-2 acre lots. Saint David's Anglican Church is adjacent to the property to the northwest. Parcels across Barracks Road are larger lot residential or open space/farm parcels. The Montvue subdivision is across Barracks Road to the northeast. (Attachment 1– Location Map.)

The property is zoned RA Rural Areas, and most of the adjacent parcels are also zoned RA. A few parcels to the southeast are zoned PRD Planned Residential Development (which only contains one dwelling) and R1 Residential.

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY

Recent planning history below is detailed below:

SP201500024	A special use permit was approved on March 8, 2017 for the private school. Deadline for construction established as February 28, 2022. Maximum enrollment was limited to 150 students.
SP201900012	A special use permit was approved on July 1, 2020 for an amendment to several conditions and acreage. The deadline for construction remained February 28, 2022. Maximum enrollment remained 150 students.
SP202100011	A special use permit amendment was approved on November 3, 2021 to extend the deadline for construction to August 28, 2025. Maximum enrollment remained 150 students. The initial applicant request was to eliminate Condition #9, which

	established a deadline for construction. The Planning Commission raised concerns with not having a deadline if traffic growth occurred on Barracks Road. There was concern about allowing an unlimited amount of time to commence the use without subsequent review of the proposal based on the conditions of the transportation network when construction eventually begins. Instead of fully eliminating condition #9 as requested by the applicant, the PC recommended that Condition #9 be revised to extend the deadline by 3 ½ years, to August 28, 2025 and the Board of Supervisors approved the SP amendment retaining Condition #9. (Attachment 3- SP202100011 Conditions and Concept Plan)
SDP202400019	Initial site plan for construction of the school consistent with SP202100011 was approved February 26, 2025. The proposed plan includes entrance and turn lane improvements on Barracks Roads, as shown on the SP concept plan. The applicant expects to submit a final site plan in May 2025.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

The applicant has requested the existing special use permit (SP) for a private school (SP201900012) to amend a condition (condition #9 – see full text below), which requires construction of the private school to commence by August 28, 2025; otherwise, the existing special use permit would be deemed abandoned and the authority granted there under would be terminated. (Attachment 2) There are no new buildings proposed, the layout of the site is not being revised, the hours of operation are not changing, and there are no changes in enrollment numbers proposed. The maximum enrollment permitted at the school will remain at 150 students.

Existing language of condition #9, which is proposed to be amended with this SP amendment request:

If the construction of the private school for which this Special Use Permit is issued is not commenced by August 28, 2025, the permit shall be deemed abandoned and the authority granted there under shall thereupon terminate.

The applicant has indicated that construction may not begin by the specified date, which is less than six months away. However, they are diligently working to meet the deadline and have made significant progress and investment in seeking necessary applications and permits.

COMMUNITY MEETING

No community meeting was held for this application. Given the request is limited to a one-year extension of Condition #9, and no other changes are proposed, a community meeting was not required. No community meeting was required with the previous amendment SP201900012.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST

Section 33.39(B) of the Zoning Ordinance states that the Planning 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.**

There is not expected to be any substantial detriment on adjacent parcels. All conditions approved with SP201900012 are proposed to continue except for extending Condition #9 to allow for more time for construction to begin by one year only. No changes to enrollment levels, hours of operation, or the layout of the site are proposed with this request.

The nearest dwellings are within the Colthurst Farm neighborhood and are approximately 350 feet away from the edge of the building and sports fields envelopes. The proposed improvements will remain within the previously approved envelopes. The landscaped buffers will be maintained on all sides of the site and the existing tree-line around the pond will continue to be preserved to help screen the site and limit noise impacts.

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 Rural Areas zoning district in this area is characterized by mostly small and large lot residential uses and a few parcels that appear to be dedicated to agricultural and/or open space uses. The proposed amendment to the previously approved special use permit is not expected to change the character of the nearby area. No changes to the hours of operation or the maximum enrollment permitted at the school are proposed. In addition, no changes to the layout of the site are proposed. The building envelopes and building sizes are not changing with this request; they remain the same as those approved with SP201900012.

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

The proposed special use permit amendment will keep the same general development plan as previously approved with SP201900012. The proposed extension of the construction commencement condition that is requested with this application does not change the use and continues to be in harmony with the purpose and intent of the district. With the recommended conditions, the proposal will not significantly change the impact of the use or its consistency with the purpose and intent of the ordinance.

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

The proposed amendment to the previously approved special use permit will not restrict the current uses or other by-right uses available at this property or adjacent properties.

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

There are no supplementary regulations in Section 5 that are applicable to this use.

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

The character of the use and the scale of the use would not change with the proposed extension of Condition #9. No change in circumstance exists to cause any concerns about public health, safety, and welfare. The use cannot commence without the appropriate site development plans (as applicable), building permits, and zoning clearances. These processes will ensure that all State and County regulations, special use permit conditions, and all necessary building and fire inspections have been approved. This will include final approval of well and septic.

Barracks Road is classified by VDOT as Major Collector with a 60-foot right-of-way and is a striped two-lane 24-foot wide road. There has been no major increase in traffic since the special use permit was originally approved in 2017, or since the extension to August 28, 2025 was approved in 2021, as indicated by most recent trip counts:

Year	Average Annual Daily Trips	Average Annual Weekday Trips
2017	6913	7500
2018	7045	7500
2019	7154	7600
2020	5963	6400
2021	6615	7000
2022	6776	7100
2023	7068	7400

Source: VDOT Pathways to Planning Traffic Count Data

Though a traffic study was not required for this request, the applicant provided data previously demonstrating anticipated traffic impacts derived from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). The applicant demonstrated turn lanes required by the previous concept plan will be adequate to serve the school. The numbers indicate a private school with an enrollment of 150 students will generate approximately 372 daily trips.

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and Albemarle County Transportation staff have reviewed this proposal and have no concerns. The site has adequate frontage and site distance to provide needed turn lanes. Barracks Road is in adequate condition for the use. With the addition of turn lanes to the site, overall impacts to traffic on Barracks Road are expected to be minimal. It is not expected that the addition of the school use will have a significant impact on traffic on this road.

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

The Comprehensive Plan designates the property as Rural Areas, which calls for the preservation and protection of agricultural, forestal, open space and natural, historic and scenic resources and allows for a density of 0.5 units per acre on development lots. The site has previously been approved for use as a private school, and no change in the type of use on the site is proposed with the requested amendment to the special use permit. The defined extent of development on the site will limit the area of land disturbance to only a portion of the property and will help to protect natural resources in areas not designated for development such as existing woods, areas of critical slopes, and the pond, stream, and WPO buffer system on the western portion of the property, which is supportive of the Rural Areas goal of preserving and protecting forestal, open space, and natural resources.

SUMMARY

Staff finds the following factors favorable to this request:

1. The proposed changes are not expected to have an impact on the surrounding area. No enrollment increase is requested and no revisions to the site layout or hours of operation are requested.

Staff finds the following factor(s) unfavorable to this request:

1. None identified.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Based on the findings described in this staff report and the factors identified as favorable, staff recommends approval of special use permit SP-2025-00001 Field School of Charlottesville:

1. Development of the use must be in general accord with the concept plan entitled "Special Use Permit Concept Plan and Exhibits, Field School of Charlottesville, SP2021-00011 – Amendment to SP2019-12, Tax Map 60, Parcel 68, Albemarle County, Virginia," prepared by Shimp Engineering, P.C., dated 2021.05.17, last revised 2021.07.07, as determined by the Director of Planning and the Zoning Administrator. To be in general accord with the concept plan, the development and use shall reflect the following major elements as shown on the concept plan:
 - a. Locations of buildings and sports fields within the indicated envelopes
 - b. Maximum total building footprint of thirty thousand (30,000) square feet
 - c. Maximum footprint of twelve thousand (12,000) square feet for any single building
 - d. Preservation and installation of tree buffers as indicated
 - e. Preservation of wooded areas and slopes outside of building and sports field envelopes as indicated

Minor modifications to the plan which are in general accord with the elements above may be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance. Modifications are to be considered in terms of minimizing or improving impacts on adjoining properties and roadways. Buildings and parking may be developed in phases.

2. The maximum enrollment must be no more than one hundred fifty (150) students.
3. Classroom instruction must not begin before eight o'clock a.m. (8:00 a.m.) and must not continue later than five o'clock p.m. (5:00 p.m.). These hours shall not apply to sports events. Classes shall not be held on Saturday or Sunday.
4. Occasional non-sporting school-related events may occur on and after five o'clock p.m. (5:00 p.m.) on Monday through Friday and at any hours on Saturday and Sunday. Occasional community events may occur on and after six o'clock p.m. (6:00 p.m.) on Monday through Friday and at any hours on Saturday and Sunday.
5. No construction for the use shall begin without written approval of the proposed septic facilities from the Virginia Department of Health.
6. No outdoor lighting of sports fields shall be installed for this use.
7. There must be no outdoor amplified sound associated with this use.
8. Any new outdoor lighting shall be only full cut-off fixtures and shielded to reflect light away from all abutting properties. A lighting plan limiting light levels at the property lines to no greater than 0.3 foot candles shall be submitted to the Zoning Administrator or his designee for approval.
9. If the construction of the private school for which this Special Use Permit is issued is not commenced by August 28, 2026, the permit shall be deemed abandoned and the authority granted thereunder shall thereupon terminate.

MOTIONS:

A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:

I move to recommend approval of SP-2025-00001 for the reasons outlined in the staff report.

B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:

I move to recommend denial of SP-2025-00001. Should a commissioner motion to recommend denial, he or she should state the reason(s) for recommending approval.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Location Map
2. Application Narrative
3. SP202100011 Approved Conditions and Concept Plan