

Albemarle County Planning Commission
July 14, 2015

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, July 14, 2015, at 6:00 p.m., at the County Office Building, Auditorium, Second Floor, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Members attending were Karen Firehock, Tim Keller, Thomas Loach, Cal Morris, Chair; Richard Randolph, and Mac Lafferty, Vice Chair. Bruce Dotson was absent. Julia Monteith, AICP, Senior Land Use Planner for the University of Virginia was present.

Staff present was Rachel Falkenstein, Senior Planner; Megan Yaniglos, Principal Planner; Claudette Grant, Senior Planner; J.T. Newberry, Planner; David Benish, Chief of Planning; Sharon Taylor, Clerk to Planning Commission, Wayne Cilimberg, Director of Planning and Andy Herrick, Senior Assistant County Attorney.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum:

Mr. Morris, Chair, called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and established a quorum.

Public Hearing Items

a. SP-2015-00019 UVA Indoor Golf Practice Facility

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Samuel Miller

TAX MAP/PARCEL: 07500-00-00-06300; 06000-00-00-028B0; 06000-00-00-028C0

LOCATION: 470 Birdwood Drive, Charlottesville, VA

PROPOSAL: Amend SP96-53 to allow construction of 10,000 square foot indoor golf practice facility for University of Virginia golf teams.

PETITION: Swim, golf, tennis or similar athletic facilities under Section 13.2.2 of zoning ordinance. No dwellings proposed.

ZONING: R-1 Residential - 1 unit/acre.

ENTRANCE CORRIDOR: Yes

AIRPORT IMPACT AREA: Yes

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Institutional – schools, universities and colleges and ancillary facilities and public facilities and utilities.

(Rachel Falkenstein)

Ms. Falkenstein presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding SP-2015-19 UVA Indoor Golf Practice Facility.

Specifics of the Proposal

The purpose of the public hearing is a request to amend an existing special use permit SP1996-53 to allow construction of an indoor golf practice facility for the UVA golf teams. Special use permits are required for swim, golf, tennis or similar facilities within R-1 zoning.

Currently the parcel consists of 3 parcels of about 544 acres total. The applicant is in the process of a boundary lot adjustment to combine the 3 parcels into 1. The property is located on Ivy Road or Route 250 west between the neighborhoods of Bellair and Edman.

The property is on the National Register of Historic Places. The two parcels up front contain the Birdwood Mansion property. It consists of the mansion, which is located in the center and

several outbuildings, four of which are currently rented for residential use. The proposed facility will require the demolition of one of the existing outbuildings, which is a noncontributing structure to the historic district.

There is a condition on the existing special use permit requiring an amendment for new construction or expansion. They are asking for an amendment to allow for the construction of a two-story, 10,000 square foot facility. It will include 8 indoor hitting bays that will open to the existing driving range as well as locker rooms, offices and meeting space for the golf teams. The proposed facility is located just north of the existing driving range so they will hit out onto the driving range. The users will include the men and women's UVA Golf Teams and club members for private lessons. Access to the facility will be via Golf Course Drive.

Staff reviewed the layout plan showing the proposed facility as well as provisions for access and parking. The applicant will be constructing a new access drive to the facility off of Golf Course Drive. Currently there is a gate at the entrance of Route 250 and Golf Course Drive. They will be relocating that gate just south of the access drive to allow team members access to the facility after hours. There will be a second gate constructed between the new parking area and Birdwood Drive and to make sure users of the facility use Golf Course Drive as an access.

The reason for restricting the entrance off of Birdwood Drive is the access is very narrow and it does not meet commercial entrance standards. There are two historic stone walls on either side of the entrance so the entrance cannot be widened. That entrance will remain for use by the residences and access to the Birdwood Mansion. But, the wider commercial entrance off of Golf Course Drive will be utilized for the facility. The structure to be demolished is 470 Birdwood Drive, which is currently being rented out as a residence. But, it is a noncontributing structure to the Historic District. The Department of Historical Resources has commented that the construction of the facility will not impact the status of the site and its historic status.

Visibility –

The new facility is anticipated to have very limited visibility from Birdwood Mansion historic property as well as from adjacent neighborhoods due to the topography and vegetation on site. It will not be visible from Ivy Road. It is not anticipated to be visible from Birdwood Mansion. In a picture from the back yard of Birdwood staff pointed out you can barely see the driving range and the existing house is not visible. There is limited visibility from adjacent neighborhoods.

Factors for Consideration -

Favorable Factors

1. The facility is not anticipated to be visible from Route 250 and will be well screened from adjacent residential neighborhoods.
2. Construction of the facility will not impact the status of the Birdwood Mansion on the National Register of Historic Places.
3. The facility is not anticipated to generate additional traffic because of the fact that it will be used by current users of the golf course. UVA Golf Team has currently used Birdwood Golf Course as their home facility and they practice there.

Unfavorable Factors

1. None identified.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of SP2015-19 UVA Indoor Golf Practice Facility with the following four conditions:

1. Development shall be in general accord with the plan titled "UVA Golf Indoor Practice Facility, Site Plan Diagram" prepared by Dewberry dated April 30, 2015 (hereafter "Layout Plan") as determined by the Director of Planning and the Zoning Administrator. To be in general accord with the Layout Plan, development and use shall reflect the following major elements as shown on the plan:
 - a. Building location, orientation and mass
 - b. Access to the site via new road labeled "Access Drive"Minor modifications to the plan that do not otherwise conflict with the elements listed above may be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.
2. Ingress and egress along Birdwood Drive shall be restricted, to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator, to only those residences served by Birdwood Drive and shall not be used as an access to the indoor golf practice facility.
3. Any new construction at the existing golf course facility and site other than the site improvements shown on the Layout Plan, except for minor changes (such as additional practice tees, modifications of greens and other changes that do not require a site plan), shall require an amended special use permit.
4. The owner shall continue to implement an Integrated Pest Management/Nutrient Management Plan to reduce adverse water quality impacts.

Staff pointed out that conditions 3 and 4 are carry over conditions from the previous special use permit that they are keeping. However, staff has updated them a little bit. If there were any questions, she would be happy to answer them.

Mr. Morris invited questions for staff

Mr. Keeler asked if there was archeology proposed for any of the ground disturbance areas. He realized that the facility is on the footprint of the existing house, but the roadway changes.

Ms. Falkenstein replied she was not aware of any archeological studies.

Ms. Monteith said she would ask the applicant more about archeology. She thinks there has been archeology in this area, but she does not have specific information on that.

There being no further questions, Mr. Morris opened the public hearing to the applicant and public comment. He invited the applicant to address the Commission.

Fred Missel, Director of Design and Development for the UVA Foundation, thanked the Commission for their time tonight. He acknowledged two of his colleagues in the audience Tim Rose, Chief Executive Officer for UVA Foundation and Chris Schooley, Project Manager with the UVA Foundation. He also thanked Ms. Falkenstein and the other staff members for the great job they did. He really can't add much to staff's presentation, but said he would try.

In a PowerPoint presentation he started by giving a quick overview of the ownership. UVA Foundation has been the owner of the Birdwood Golf Course for some years 26 years to be exact. They did not own what he would call the center or hole in the donut, which is the Birdwood Mansion property and surrounding outbuildings. That was owned by the University until last July. So currently now it makes sense to have one owner that covers the entire area.

Part of the reason they were before the Commission this evening is because the special use permit did not apply to that hole in the donut and they are asking that it be extended to that this evening. The primary reason for the request is obviously the desire to locate UVA Golf Practice Facility on the parcel. Their primary effort is as stewards of the property for the University they have tried to really bring to the forefront the importance of the historic nature of this site. They based the building location on three studies. They hired a national firm called Hart Howerton and they commissioned the master plan. They used that master plan to direct the location of this site. Secondly, they commissioned a historic landscape plan, which actually focused the lens a little bit further and recommended the site in context with the landscape. Additionally, they reviewed the site, as Ms. Falkenstein has mentioned with the DHR and with the county to ensure that this would not in any way adversely impact the historic resource.

They were really focused on a couple of things one is viewshed and views from the main mansion looking out. Secondly, distance from the mansion to the actual property. They wanted to make sure that it was not too close to the property so that it could be perceived as impacting the historic character. The building is not visible from Route 250 as Ms. Falkenstein mentioned and it has extremely limited visibility from the adjoining neighborhoods.

He directed their attention to the next slide that is an image taken from our historic landscape plan. It identifies the location of the historic core. The historic core is shown here in the light red. The blue star represents the location of the project that they are discussing tonight. The two black arrows on either side are the preserved viewshed. It is a little bit misleading because it looks like the viewshed should come further to the right on this image, but in fact it is completely blocked by not only other structures but landscape.

The next slide is a little bit of an enlargement in a sense and showing the entire golf practice facility. He pointed out the actual location of the building and the viewshed cone that he referred on the previous slide, and the existing driving range. So they can see that the hitting facility will be directed facing south. Then, again, zooming further the same image that Ms. Falkenstein showed this illustrates the access off of Golf Course Drive and directly into the parking areas, some of the existing structures including a home, another rental, and again the historic core back in the area away from the actual facility itself.

Finally, the next slide is an image of the facility. They took special care in reviewing the actual design. These are concept drawings. The front elevation is the view that will be seen from the Birdwood Mansion side. Although saying that he would actually highlight the fact that it is highly unlikely that you will see much if any of the property of this project from the Birdwood Mansion side. They do want to minimize the actual scale of the building though from that side. It is a single story on the front elevation. The rear elevation takes advantage of the topography that slopes down naturally and they are able to carve out the basement level, which will include the eight hitting bays that they can see the golfers hitting in front of in that lower left image.

The project will also include coach offices, locker rooms, lobbies for student athletics to gather as well as club storage and other peripheral uses within the property. He thanked the Commission for their time and offered to address any questions.

Mr. Morris invited questions for the applicant.

Mr. Keller said he spoke to the reuse of the site so that there is not ground disturbance there and as he has shown us the studies that were done. So can they then take from that the

archeological aspect of where the entry road will come into the site in the area around the mid-century house that is there that is going to be removed has been looked at.

Mr. Missel said that was a great question. From his knowledge, and he checked with his colleagues as well, they are not aware of an archeological study that has taken place in that site. They do have a lot of historic data. Actually they have a plan that goes all the way back to the 1800's of this area. They have some pretty good mapping and an understanding of what might have been there. They feel pretty certain that there was not anything specific in terms of the structure, for example. But, it is something they can look into for certain.

Mr. Loach noted in the staff report on page 3 it says staff has heard concerns from neighbors in Bellair about the proposed lighting in the parking area. He asked is there any thought to limiting the hours. If they are having the driving range at night unless the range is lit they don't know where the balls go.

Mr. Missel replied there is no plan to light the range. There is a plan because they obviously have to light the parking lot for student athlete safety and other public safety reasons.

Mr. Loach asked would there be a consideration of limiting hours to a maximum of say 10 p.m. in the building so that the light at least is only on for a certain time.

Mr. Missel replied they can certainly check into that with UVA.

Mr. Loach suggested or technology that you can turn it on when you need it for meetings.

There being no further questions for the applicant, Mr. Morris invited public comment.

Sally Brown, resident of 110 Shamrock Road in the city, said she goes to Birdwood a lot. She finds it a place of great beauty and fears that this project is a fait accompli. It has been well thought out. They have had pictures and interesting text. It would appear that there have been no stone left unturned. Having said that she would just like to make a public statement that she thinks Birdwood and its properties there are really very special. If they have not been out there recently or never been there do go and stand behind the mansion and look at the view. It is pretty special and has a lot of very interesting history all of which has been considered by the University of Virginia Foundation as they planned this project. She does not think she needs to say anymore except this Mr. Keller speaks a lot of archaeology and she thinks that is important as the project proceeds. She dare say that the University of Virginia will be very proud of this facility once it is built. But, go take a last look before this very beautiful place is disturbed.

Neil Williamson, with the Free Enterprise Forum, said as this body knows they don't take positions on projects. They are a policy based organization and as such they have to ask the question and sometimes they are uncomfortable questions. The UVA Foundation is before the Commission today with a project that benefits the University of Virginia. If you had a similar relationship in the private sector any Commissioner would recuse themselves. While UVA is a non-voting body on this body he questions whether there is a need for such a recusal when UVA Foundation or UVA materials are considered. He just asks you to consider that.

There being no further public comment, Mr. Morris closed the public hearing to bring the matter before the Commission for discussion and action.

Mr. Loach said he appreciates the Foundation's consideration for the lighting and he thinks the technology is there to solve those problems. Again, he thanked staff for the staff report.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Morris asked for a motion.

Motion: Mr. Loach moved and Mr. Lafferty seconded to recommend approval of SP-2015-19 UVA Indoor Golf Practice Facility with conditions identified in the staff report.

The motion passed by a vote of (6:0). (Dotson absent)

Mr. Morris noted that SP-2015-19 UVA Indoor Golf Practice Facility would be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation for approval at a time to be determined.

The Planning Commission recessed at 7:19 p.m. and the meeting reconvened at 7:28 p.m.

(Recorded and transcribed by Sharon C. Taylor, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning)