



**COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE
PLANNING STAFF REPORT SUMMARY**

Project Name: SP201400015 Heartrock Day Camp	Staff: Scott Clark, Senior Planner
Planning Commission Public Hearing: April 21 2015	Board of Supervisors Public Hearing: TBA
Owner: Heartrock Family Farm LLC	Applicant: Carolyn Schuyler
Acreage: 28.01 acres	Special Use Permit: 10.2.2.20, Day camp, boarding camp (reference 5.1.05).
TMP: 00600-00-00-028B0 Location: 6600 Blackwells Hollow Road	Existing Zoning and By-right use: RA -- Rural Areas: agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential density (0.5 unit/acre in development)
Magisterial District: White Hall	Conditions: Yes
RA (Rural Areas): X	Requested # of Dwelling Units: NA
Proposal: Day camp with outdoor play areas and environmental education	Comprehensive Plan Designation: Rural Areas - preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources/ density (0.5 unit/ acre)
Character of Property: The property is largely undeveloped, with open areas near Blackwells Hollow Road and wooded areas in the higher elevations (see Attachment B).	Use of Surrounding Properties: Uses of adjacent properties include farms, forests, residences, and the County's Patricia Ann Byrom Forest Preserve Park
Factors Favorable: 1. The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's standards for "alternative" commercial uses in the Rural Areas, and the site could easily revert to agricultural, silvicultural, and/or conservation uses. 2. The design and scale of the use are consistent with the character of the surrounding rural area.	Factors Unfavorable: 1. The proposed layout of the site would place a play area in close proximity to a public road, raising safety concerns. A condition recommended by staff would address this factor by requiring safety fencing around the play area.
RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of this Special Use Permit, with conditions.	

STAFF PERSON:
PLANNING COMMISSION:
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

Scott Clark
April 21, 2015
TBA

PETITION:

PROJECT: SP201400015 Heartrock – Day Camp

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: White Hall

TAX MAP/PARCEL: 00600-00-00-028B0

LOCATION: 6600 Blackwells Hollow Road

PROPOSAL: Day camp

PETITION: Day camp with outdoor play areas and environmental education as permitted under Section 10.2.2.20 of zoning ordinance. No dwelling units proposed.

ZONING: RA Rural Areas - agricultural, forestal, and fishery uses; residential density (0.5 unit/acre in development lots). Day camp, boarding camp (reference 5.1.05) – (10.2.2.20).

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Rural Areas – preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources/ density (0.5 unit/ acre in development lots)

CHARACTER OF THE AREA:

The site is on the east face of the Blue Ridge, and the area is steep and largely forested, with some residential uses. The site is adjacent to the Patricia Ann Byrom Forest Preserve, which lies to the northwest and northeast, and which has existing parking, picnic facilities, restrooms, and trails. The nearest dwelling is approximately 125 feet from the barn on the site. Other dwellings on adjacent properties are approximately 325 to 750 feet away.

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY:

None.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL:

The proposed use (see Attachment C for the conceptual plan) would include:

- An existing barn, to be used for shelter, programs, and restroom facilities
- A play area with “natural playscapes” incorporating trees, rocks, water, and other natural features
- Recreational features such as trails and a labyrinth
- A primitive tent-camping area with six sites
- The conceptual plan shows 28 parking spaces. With typical four-person vehicles, that would allow a maximum of 112 attendees.
- Landscaping features such as edible gardens and native-plant areas

STAFF COMMENT:

Section 33.8 of the Zoning Ordinance states that the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors shall reasonably consider the following factors when reviewing and acting upon an application for a special use permit:

No substantial detriment. The proposed special use will not be a substantial detriment to adjacent lots.

Conditions of approval prohibiting amplified sound systems and setting limits on lighting output would prevent some nuisance effects on adjacent properties. Some noise impacts on adjacent properties would occur, such as the sound of children in the play areas.

Character of district unchanged. The character of the district will not be changed by the proposed special use.

Recreational uses can be appropriate in the Rural Areas. As this use would not involve major construction or significant amounts of new infrastructure, it would be reversible and the land could be returned to agricultural or silvicultural use.

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

The purposes of the Zoning Ordinance include a goal to “[t]o facilitate the provision of adequate police and fire protection, disaster evacuation, civil defense, transportation, water, sewerage, flood protection, schools, parks, forests, playgrounds, recreational facilities, airports and other public requirements.” This use would provide an additional form of playgrounds and recreational facilities.

...with the uses permitted by right in the district

Outside of the new entrance road and parking areas, the use would require little new physical infrastructure. Impacts on agriculture, forestry, and conservation in the area would be negligible. Nearby residential uses could experience some noise impacts from people engaging in outdoor activities.

...with the regulations provided in section 5 as applicable,

5.1.05 DAY CAMP, BOARDING CAMP

a. Provisions for outdoor cooking, campfires, cooking pits, etc., shall be subject to Albemarle County fire official approval whether or not a site development plan is required;

Any such cooking or fire areas will automatically be subject to this requirement.

All such uses shall conform to the requirements of the Virginia Department of Health Bureau of Tourist Establishment Sanitation and other applicable requirements.

Staff recommends a condition of approval that would require written approval from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) before the use could begin. The applicant is already working with VDH to ensure that water and restroom facilities meet requirements for the tent-camping area.

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

The applicants have worked with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to find an acceptable entrance location, and VDOT has no objection to the use. Staff recommends a condition of approval requiring the applicant to get written approval of the entrance design and location before the County can approve the final site plan for the use.

The main playground area, labeled as “Mowed Play Yards” on the conceptual plan (Attachment C), would be located within several feet of Blackwells Hollow Road. In order to prevent children from leaving the play area and getting onto the road, staff has recommended that the applicant use safety fencing, rather than the traditional rail fencing now found on the site (or in addition to it). While the area closest to the road is of the greatest concern, staff feels that the entire play area should have this fencing, in order to ensure that children cannot easily get access to the road. Included below is a condition of approval that would require this fencing, as well as requiring that the gates into this area be located at least 300 feet from Blackwells Hollow Road—in other words, close to the barn and parking area and away from traffic. The fencing would be required to meet ASTM Standard F2049, the “Standard Safety Performance Specification for Fences/Barriers for Public, Commercial, and Multi-Family Residential Use Outdoor Play Areas.” (ASTM International, formerly known as the American Society for Testing and Materials, publishes technical standards for a wide variety of uses.)

In order to manage use and traffic on the site, and to prevent levels of use beyond what would be supported by the proposed amount of parking, staff recommends that the facility be staffed at all times that customers are present, except for times when it is only in use by overnight campers. (The limited size of the tent-camping area makes over-use of the site unlikely, and the camping experience is intended to be primitive.) The applicants had originally proposed to only staff the site when it was open to the general public, and not when the entire facility was reserved for private groups whose size could be limited. However, staff feels that having staff on site would increase safety and provide for conflict resolution, for example if members of the general public attempted to use the site when it was already reserved.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. The use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The Rural Areas Plan includes a goal calling for the County to “Encourage creative and diverse forms of rural production and support rural land uses that provide rural landowners with economic viability.” This property could be developed with up to four residences by right. The proposed use would be an alternative to residential development, and could be more easily converted back to agricultural and silvicultural use.

The plan states that such alternative uses should be:

- *Reversible (so that the land can easily return to farming, forestry, conservation, or other preferred rural uses);*

Other than the driveway and parking area, the use would not create areas that could not revert to preferred rural uses.

- *Scaled and sited to cause minimal impacts on their rural surroundings;*

The majority of the impacts of the use would occur in already-disturbed areas of the property. The proposed amount of parking would limit the overall number of customers the site could support, thus preventing the use from becoming out of scale with the rural surroundings.

- *Minimal in their public health and environmental impacts; and*

The small amount of construction on the site would limit impacts on the natural resources of the site and the surrounding parcels.

- *Viable with no increase in public infrastructure or services, either at time of approval or later.*

The use would be supported by on-site water and septic capacity, and no increase in public infrastructure has been requested or recommended.

SUMMARY:

Staff has identified the following factors favorable to this application:

1. The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan’s standards for “alternative” commercial uses in the Rural Areas, and the site could easily revert to agricultural, silvicultural, and/or conservation uses.
2. The design and scale of the use are consistent with the character of the surrounding rural area.

Staff has identified the following factor unfavorable to this application:

1. The proposed layout of the site would place a play area in close proximity to a public road, raising safety concerns. A condition recommended by staff would address this factor by requiring safety fencing around the play area.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Based on the findings contained in this staff report, staff recommends approval of SP201400015 Heartrock Day Camp subject to the following conditions:

1. Development of the use shall be in general accord with the conceptual plan titled “Heartrock Farm,” prepared by Sophie Johnston, Landscape Architect, and dated February 17th, 2015 (hereafter, the “Conceptual Plan”) as determined by the Director of Planning and the Zoning Administrator. To be in general accord with the Conceptual Plan, the development shall reflect the following major elements within the development essential to the design of the development:
 - Number of parking spaces (maximum of 28)
 - Number and location of tent-camping sites
 - Size and location of barn

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

2. Customer parking shall only be permitted in the parking spaces shown on the conceptual plan.
3. The permittee shall obtain written approval of the entrance design from the Virginia Department of Transportation prior to the County’s approval of the final site plan for the use.
4. The permittee shall obtain written approval of the water supply and the onsite sewage system from the Virginia Department of Health prior to the County issuing a zoning clearance and the permittee commencing the use.
5. All outdoor lighting at the site that is exclusively for camp use shall either emit 3,000 lumens or less or be a full cutoff luminaire.
6. No amplified sound systems shall be used on the site.
7. The area shown on the conceptual plan as “Mowed Play Yards” shall be within fencing conforming to ASTM standard F2049, except where it abuts a structure. All gates into this area shall be located at least 300 feet from Blackwells Hollow Road.
8. Overnight camping shall be limited to tent camping. Overnight use of recreational vehicles is not permitted.

9. At all times when the facility is open, except when the only active use is overnight camping, at least one staff member shall be on site.

PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION:

A. Should a Planning Commissioner **choose to recommend approval of** this special use permit:

Move to recommend approval of SP2014-00015 Heartrock Day Camp subject to the conditions as recommended by staff.

B. Should a Planning Commissioner **choose to recommend denial of** this special use permit:

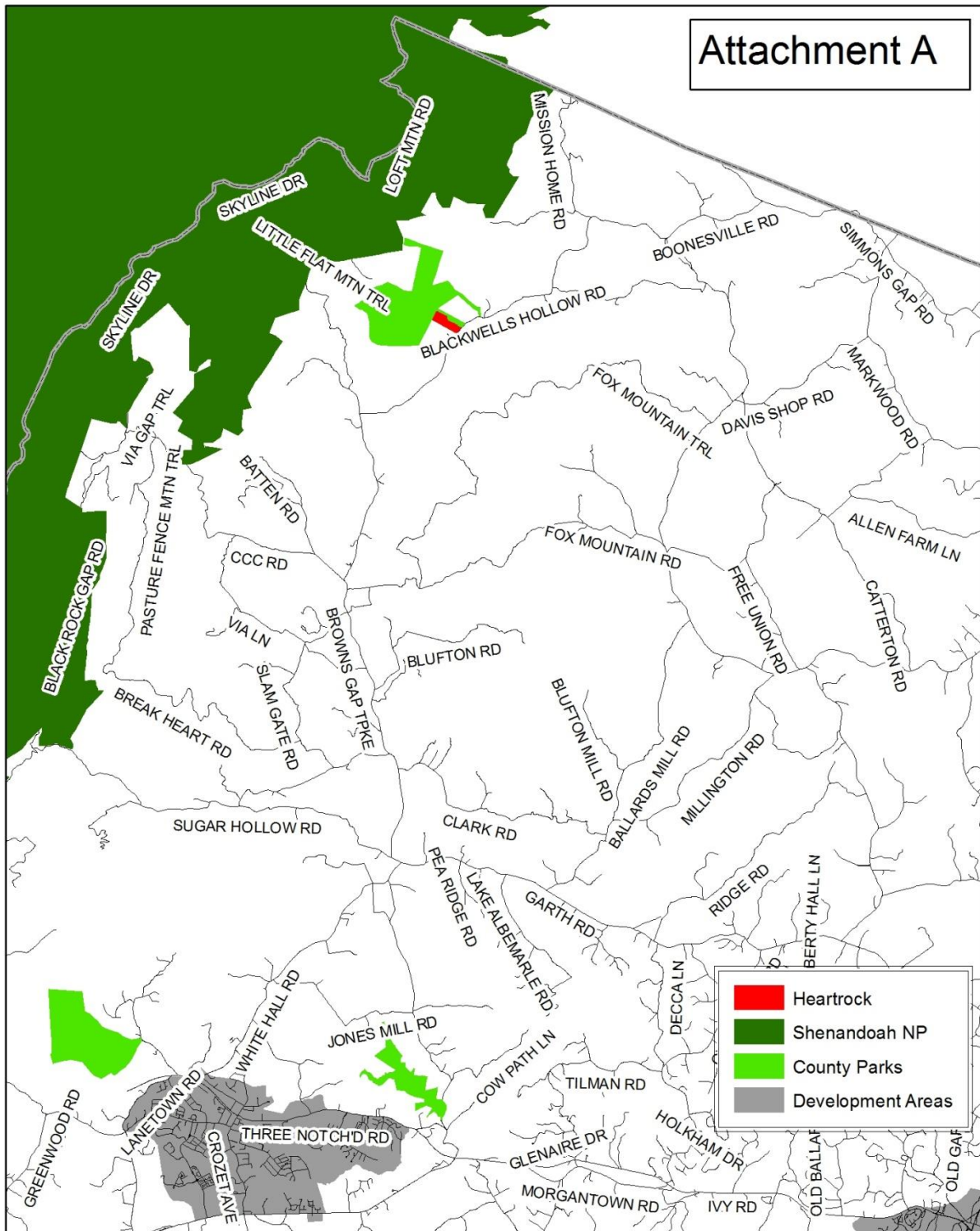
Move to recommend denial of SP2014-00015 Heartrock Day Camp. *Should a commissioner motion to recommend denial, he or she should state the reason(s) for recommending denial.*

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Area Map

Attachment B – Site Map

Attachment C – Conceptual Plan



Attachment A

SP2014-00015 Heartrock Day Camp



0 0.5 1 2 Miles



SP2014-00015 Heartrock Day Camp

