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SPECIAL USE PERMIT AMENDMENT REQUEST

TO: Rebecca Ragsdale
Planning Manager
Albemarle County Community Development

FROM: Kendra Moon, PE
Line and Grade Civil Engineering

DATE: April 10, 2025

RE: Field School of Charlottesville
Special Use Permit Amendment Application (Existing SP 2021-11)

PROJECT DETAILS

Applicant:	The Field School of Charlottesville
Consultant:	Line and Grade Civil Engineering | Kendra G. Moon, PE
Name of Project:	The Field School
Short Description:	Special Use Permit for private school in RA
Proposed Site:	TMP 60-68

PROPERTY DETAILS

Parcel ID Number:	06000-00-00-06800
Short Parcel ID:	60-68
Total Acres:	21.0 ac
Owner:	Field School of Charlottesville
Magisterial District:	Jack Jouett
Zoning:	RA Rural Areas
Proffered:	No
Overlays:	Entrance Corridor Overlay, Airport Impact Overlay
Comprehensive Plan Use:	Rural Area
Land Use:	Vacant, rural property
Surrounding Uses:	Single family residential zoned RA to west, south, and north across Barracks Road; rural forested and open space to the east; and southeast single-family residential property zoned PRD.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Field School of Charlottesville ('the applicant') would like to request an amendment to its existing Special Use Permit (SP2021-11) to amend Condition 9, which requires construction of the school commence by August 28, 2025. The applicant requests this condition be extended by one year, requiring construction to commence by August 28, 2026. This request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and is of no substantial detriment to surrounding parcels or public facilities.

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Site Location



Image 1 – Subject parcel, source: Albemarle County GIS

PROPOSAL

The applicant is requesting to amend its special use permit to extend the requirement in Condition 9 to require construction of the school to commence by August 28, 2026. This change will allow the school to continue their ongoing efforts towards securing site construction permits and to move forward with construction with the goal of opening the school for the fall 2027 school year.

The Field School is not requesting any other changes to the conditions of SP2021-11. Additional information about the site and school, including the recently approved Initial Site Plan and turn lane warrant analysis are provided as part of this application.

About Field School

Field school is a small, all-boys middle school that focuses on cultivating well-rounded individuals through academics, physical activity, and artistic exploration. Currently operating out of the rented Old Crozet School near downtown Crozet, Field School has been working towards establishing its own campus on TMP 60-68, a 21-acre property on the south side of Barracks Road, just west of the City of Charlottesville.

Field School initially received approval of a Special Use Permit for this site in 2017 to establish a 150-person private school on the property. Subsequent amendments to the SP occurred in 2019 to amend the school boundaries and in 2021 to amend Condition 9 to establish the current construction commencement date of April 28, 2025.

The Barracks Road site provides the Field School with an opportunity to grow into a more central location in Albemarle County, allowing the school to offer a more hands-on, outdoor-focused learning environment. The new site will allow faculty to actively engage students in learning how to be good neighbors and responsible stewards of the land, instilling a lasting appreciation for the natural world and their role in its preservation.

Why This Request

Due to earlier delays caused by pandemic-related fundraising challenges and site design complexities, Field School is not able to meet the August 28, 2025 construction start deadline from Condition 9 of the existing Special Use Permit. In recent months, the applicant has made significant progress towards commencement, including receiving Initial Site Plan approval in March 2025 and ongoing work towards a May submission of Final Site Plan and VESMP documents.

While the applicant is actively developing its Final Site Plan and construction documents, the standard 4–6-month review and approval timeline for these plans, along with subsequent building permit, pre-construction requirements, and bonding, makes it unlikely that the applicant will be able to meet the August 2025 construction start date from Condition 9. Extending the commencement date by one year, to August 28, 2026, will provide the necessary time to complete these crucial steps towards the school's construction.

Despite past setbacks, Field School is committed to working diligently through permitting and construction over the coming months to achieve its goal of opening the Barracks Road Field School campus for the 2027 school year.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Located in the County's Rural Area, as designated in the Comprehensive Plan, the Barracks Road Field School property will be thoughtfully developed with a commitment to sustainability and minimal impact on the surrounding scenic, natural, and agricultural landscapes, a tradition Field School deeply respects. As shown on the attached Initial Site Plan, the school facilities will be situated within the existing meadow clearing, ensuring the preservation of the forested buffers along adjacent property lines and the existing 3-acre pond on the campus.

In addition, Field School will actively cultivate environmental stewardship in its students, directly aligning with the Comprehensive Plan's objective of fostering "well-informed citizens who understand the cultural, economic, and ecological aspects of the Rural Area." (Rural Area Features, pg 7.3; Rural Area Objective 7, pg 7.34).

IMPACTS ON PUBLIC FACILITIES AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

A change to Condition 9 is not expected to affect public facilities beyond any baseline impacts from what has previously been approved with this SP. Recent site design work has led to additional information about these topics that we are able to share at this time.

- Private sewer. This school campus will be served by a private on-site septic system and therefore will have no impact on the County's public sewer system. Additional site analysis has determined the location of the septic field, as shown in the attached Initial Site Plan. Soil analysis has determined that the septic field for this property can serve a maximum capacity of 150 students, in line with the approved Condition 2 from SP 2021-11, which limits enrollment to 150 students. The septic capacity will restrict the school from making future requests of the County to expand the school enrollment.
- Public water. The property is within the ACSA Jurisdictional Area for "water only" and the Field School campus will be connected to public water.

- Public streets. The applicant hired traffic engineers from Michael Baker to conduct a simulation of the proposed west bound left turn lane that will serve the campus, once constructed. The study concluded that the planned 200-foot turn lane is sufficient to accommodate projected peak hour traffic and will not result in vehicles backing up into the main travel lanes of Barracks Road.

Impact on Environmental Features

As previously mentioned, the only change requested with this SP amendment is to revise the timeline of construction from Condition 9. As such, no additional impacts on environmental features are anticipated with this SP amendment. The recently approved Initial Site Plan (attached) clearly outlines construction boundaries, and the applicant remains committed to the preservation of existing trees along the property lines, as well as the existing 3-acre pond on the site.

CONCLUSION

A one-year extension of Condition 9 is not anticipated to result in negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood or the County's designated Rural Areas. This extension will allow Field School to continue working through permitting and construction over the coming months to achieve its goal of opening the Barracks Road campus for the 2027 school year, a space where it will educate its students to become well-rounded individuals, good neighbors, and responsible stewards of the land.

List of Appendices:

Appendix A: Approved Initial Site Plan
Appendix B: Turn Lane Warrant Analysis